TOM HANKS

"THE GREEN MILE"

screenplay by
Frank Darabont

from the novel by
Stephen King

First Draft
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We each owe a death, there are no exceptions...

A SONG BEGINS, distant as a faded memory on an old Victrola:

Once I built a railroad, made it run...
Made it race against time...
Once I built a railroad, now it's done...
Brother, can you spare a dime...

OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE

plays against footage of the Great Depression, images haunting and sepia-toned, defining an era. The bread lines...the soup kitchens...the dust bowl refugees heading west with their possessions on their backs and no hope in their eyes...the strutting gangster royalty flaunting their bootleg riches...an entire generation of lost youth riding the rails...the U.S. army troops raining truncheon blows on the half-starved and forgotten veterans of World War One as "Hooverville" is set afire in the very shadow of the nation's capitol...

All these faces, all these lives, in a world not really so very long ago...

EXT - FIELD - DAY (SLOW MOTION)

...where cattails sway in the sepia-toned heat. A small scrap of fabric is snagged in the nettles, fluttering languidly...

COLOR BLEEDS SLOWLY IN as mosquitoes swarm and dragonflies skitter, showing the fabric scrap to be pale yellow...

Suddenly, a MAN WITH A SHOTGUN comes crashing through the cattails, wiping through frame and exiting...

...then ANOTHER MAN...and ANOTHER...armed with rifles, plowing through the brush, exiting frame...

...and now comes KLAUS DETTERICK, a farmer one step above shirttail-poor, a double-barrel shotgun in the crook of his arm. He pauses, horrified, seeing the scrap of cloth. He pulls it loose, turns back, screaming something in anguish...

...and still <u>more</u> men come crashing into view, flooding by us with dreamlike, slow-motion grace. ONE MAN is leading a team of DOGS, trying to untangle the leads. DEPUTY ROB McGEE is shouting for everybody to stay together...

...and under it all, we hear a sibilant, frightening whisper:

WHISPERING VOICE (V.O.)
You love your sister? You make any noise, know what happens?

And off that horrible voice, we

CUT TO:

INT - GEORGIA PINES NURSING HOME - MORNING (PRESENT DAY)

A CLOCK RADIO spews the morning weather report, abruptly pulling us into the present with a prediction of rain. PAUL EDGECOMB, late 70's/early 80's, wakes to another day...

INT - PAUL'S ROOM - MORNING

Paul stands at his bathroom mirror, meticulously buttoning his shirt. He picks up a hairbrush, starts tidying his hair...

INT - CORRIDOR - MORNING

THE OLD AND INFIRM haunt these corridors like ghosts. A WOMAN inches along on a walker. A MAN shuffles by with a rolling I.V. stand. The floor is a limey, institutional green.

Paul comes into view, spry for his age, murmurs an occasional greeting.

INT - BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

DOZENS OF RETIREES are having breakfast, sipping weak coffee or tea. Some chat and gossip, some are content to keep their own company, some just stare slackly into space.

Paul enters, sees ELAINE CONNELLY sitting with a few other ladies, sipping tea. She's 80, refined and elegant, his best friend here. She gives him a good-morning smile. He gives her a rakish wink in return, which makes her smile all the more.

Paul reaches past the people at the counter and sneaks two pieces of cold leftover toast off a serving plate. He tosses Elaine another look -- catch ya later -- and exits.

INT - HALLWAY PAST KITCHEN - MORNING

Paul slips to the back door unnoticed. Identical red plastic rain ponchos line the wall on pegs. He helps himself to one and eases outside, making good his escape.

EXT - NURSING HOME - ESTABLISHING - MORNING

Nestled in a valley of wooded hills, a drizzly mist rolling over the treetops.

Paul appears f.g., coming up the ridge in his borrowed poncho. He looks back at the valley below, inhales deeply -- this is a man who loves his walks. He pulls a piece of toast from his pocket and starts to nibble as he presses on up the ridge...

LOW ANGLE: NURSING HOME AND RIDGE BEYOND

...and we see Paul from a distance, just a speck trudging up toward the treeline. A PICKUP TRUCK rumbles into frame and

parks, a bumper sticker looming large: "I Have Seen God And His Name Is Newt Gingrich."

BRAD DOLAN gets out, an orderly in his late 20's/early 30's, arriving for work in jeans and cheesy plaid shirt. He gazes up toward the ridge, scowling and muttering softly:

BRAD

Old fuck.

He slams the door and heads for the nursing home...

EXT - WOODS - MORNING

...as CAMERA BOOMS DOWN through the trees to find Paul wandering a wooded path, munching a tidbit of toast, looking for all the world like Red Riding Hood in his plastic poncho.

It's silent here, like a church. The only sounds we hear are the twittering of birds and the hammering of a woodpecker.

A RUSTLING SOUND makes Paul freeze. He turns, becomes transfixed. Softly:

PAUL

Oh, my...

REVERSE ANGLE

reveals a magnificent BUCK not twenty feet away, misty breath punching the cold morning air. They watch each other for an endless moment, both standing stock still...

...and then the animal bounds away, vanishing into the foliage. Paul lets out a breath, shakes his head in wonder. He takes another bite of toast, moves on...

...and WE PAN WITH HIM to reveal a pair of old wooden storage shacks along the path up ahead.

INT - SHACK - MORNING

Dark in here, cobwebby and decrepit. We see Paul approaching outside the grimy window. He steps up to the glass and shades his eyes, peering curiously in as we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - NURSING HOME - DAY

Paul approaches the back door, returning from his walk. He reaches for the knob...and a figure in white lunges from behind the dumpster to grab his wrist. He whirls, gasping in fright -- it's Brad Dolan, wearing his orderly's uniform.

BRAD
Out for a little stroll, Paulie?

PAUL
Let go...

Paul tries to pull away, but Dolan's got him tight.

BRAD
What's with this poncho you got on, huh? This isn't yours.

PAUL
I got it off the wall there. There's a whole row of them.

BRAD
But not for <u>you,</u> Paulie, that's the thing. Those are for the staff.

PAUL
I just borrowed it. Don't see what harm it does.

BRAD
It's not about harm, it's about <u>rules.</u> You probably don't think an old fart like you has to mind rules anymore, but that's just not true.

Brad's eyes keep shifting -- he obviously doesn't mind abusing the elderly as long as he doesn't get caught doing it.

PAUL
I'm sorry if I broke the rules.

BRAD
You got no business up in those woods anyway, especially in the rain. What if you fall and bust a hip, huh? Who you think's gonna have to hoss your sorry old bacon back down here? Me, that's who.

PAUL
You're hurting me!

BRAD
What do you do up there, anyway? You're too old to go jerk off, so what do you do?

PAUL
Nothing. I just walk, that's all, I like to walk!

(CONTINUED)

Brad lashes out and grabs Paul's other hand, which he's been holding tightly clenched shut.

BRAD
Come on. Open up. Let Poppa see.

Paul uncurls his fingers, revealing the crushed remnants of a bit of toast, his palm slick with a greasy oleo smear.

ELAINE (O.S.)
Paul?

They turn. Elaine stands just inside the screen door with a cup of tea. Brad's eyes become calculated, wondering how much she's seen. Elaine keeps her tone level, betraying nothing:

ELAINE
I saw you coming back, thought you'd like some tea.
(beat)
Are you coming in?

PAUL
Mr. Dolan and I were...chatting. About the weather. I think we're through now.

Brad lets Paul loose, leans close:

BRAD
Paulie? You tell anyone I squeezed your po' ol' hand, I'll tell 'em you're having senile delusions. Who you think they'll believe?

Brad walks off. Paul turns, watches him go. The screen door opens and Elaine steps out, her face pale. Paul gives her a strained, though grateful, smile as we

CUT TO:

INT - TV ROOM - DAY

Jerry Springer's on the tube, whipping his studio audience into a frenzy. PAN OFF TO REVEAL DOZENS OF OLD FOLKS watching on couches and folding chairs. An old black fellow named PETE is grousing to a GROUP OF ELDERLY LADIES...

PETE
Why we always watch this crap?

ELDERLY LADY #1
It's interesting.

PETE
Interesting? Bunch'a inbred trailer trash, all they ever talk about is fucking...

...and WE CONTINUE PANNING to Paul and Elaine sitting near the back, talking quietly as Paul rubs his bruised hand:

ELAINE
We should report him.

PAUL
That might just provoke him all the more, make things worse for everybody.

ELAINE
It's not everybody he has it in for, Paul. It's you.
(off his look)
What did you do to provoke him in the first place? Nothing. He's just an abusive bully, and should be made to stop.

PAUL
Ellie, please...

PETE

is at the TV, switching channels while:

ELDERLY LADIES
...no, the Movie Classics channel is further down...<u>past</u> the Home Shopping...keep going...

He finds the Movie Classics channel, which is playing an old black and white musical -- "Top Hat," with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. A delighted reaction:

ELDERLY LADY #2
Oh! This is wonderful...

PAUL

idly shifts his gaze to the TV...and his expression goes slack with recognition and dismay. Elaine sees the look in his eyes.

He glances away...even briefly considers walking out...but in the end, he can't help himself. The past just caught up with him with a freight-train wallop, and, for once, he decides to ride the rails...

He looks back at the TV. On screen, Fred and Ginger have begun their famous "Cheek to Cheek" number, with Astaire singing in that sublime, easy-go-lucky way of his:

FRED ASTAIRE
Heaven, I'm in heaven...and my heart beats so that I can hardly speak...

SLOW PUSH IN on Paul, watching. He'd like to take his eyes off the screen, but the movie has him in a grip tighter than Brad Dolan's. Elaine is watching him with puzzled concern:

ELAINE
Paul? What is it?

No response. All he can hear is that music, all he can see are those dancers. The figures on TV are gliding with ghostlike grace in their silvery, phosphor-dot world of long ago...

Paul abruptly bursts into tears.

The room goes quiet, everything comes to a standstill. All eyes turn, some concerned, others merely curious. Paul just sits sobbing into his hands, shoulders heaving.

ELAINE
Paul...my God...

ORDERLY
(rushing over)
What is it? What's wrong?

PAUL
It's okay...I'll be okay...

Another orderly appears -- Brad Dolan. He puts his hand on Paul's shoulder and leans close, feigning concern.

BRAD
S'matter, Paulie? Why the boo-hoo-hoo? Something nasty happen?

Elaine shoves his hand away, eyes flashing with anger.

ELAINE
Mr. Edgecomb will be perfectly fine without your help, thank you.

Brad backs off with a "hey, suit yourself" gesture. Elaine helps Paul to his feet and leads him out.

CUT TO:

INT - SUN ROOM - DAY

Paul is staring out the windows, pensive and drained. It's raining now, pattering the glass and the lawn beyond. Elaine waits across from him, wishing he would speak. Softly:

PAUL
I guess sometimes the past just catches up with you, whether you want it to or not. It's silly.

ELAINE
Was it the film?
(off his look)
It was, wasn't it?

PAUL
I haven't spoken of these things in a long time, Ellie. Over sixty years.

She reaches out, gently takes his hand.

ELAINE
Paul. I'm your friend.

PAUL
Yes. Yes you are.

Paul wonders if he's even up to talking about it after all this time...and decides that perhaps he is:

PAUL
I ever tell you I was a prison guard during the Depression?

ELAINE
You've mentioned it.

PAUL
Did I mention I was in charge of death row? That I supervised all the executions?

This <u>does</u> come as a surprise. She shakes her head.

PAUL
They usually call death row the Last Mile, but we called ours the Green Mile, because the floor was the color of faded limes. We had the electric chair then. Old Sparky, we called it.
(beat)
I've lived a lot of years, Ellie,

PAUL (cont.)
but 1935 takes the prize. That was the year I had the worst urinary infection of my life. That was also the year of John Coffey, and the two dead girls...

FADE TO BLACK

IN BLACKNESS, A TITLE CARD APPEARS:

"The Two Dead Girls"

CUT TO:

EXT - GEORGIA COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (1935)

HUNDREDS OF PRISONERS work the fields, pickaxes rising and falling in waves, a prison song being sung in cadence with the work. GUARDS patrol on horseback, rifles aimed at the sky.

A late 20's Ford PRISON TRUCK comes chugging into view along the road, kicking up a long trail of dust in the heat. It seems to be riding unusually low on its rear suspension.

EXT - COLD MOUNTAIN PENITENTIARY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

A Depression-era prison in the south. The prison truck sways down the rutted dirt road toward the main gate...

INT - E BLOCK TOILET - DAY

...while PAUL EDGECOMB, early 40's, stands in a cramped toilet in his guard's uniform, trying to piss. His face is pained, his forehead beaded with sweat.

INT - E BLOCK (THE GREEN MILE) - DAY

BRUTUS HOWELL (nicknamed "Brutal" for his intimidating size, but he's actually rather thoughtful by nature) stands at the entry door of the cellblock, peering out through a viewing slot. He sees the prison truck arrive at the main gate.

He turns and nods to fellow guard DEAN STANTON sitting at the duty desk, then crosses the Green Mile -- a wide corridor of faded green linoleum running some sixty paces top to bottom, with four large cells to a side.

Brutal steps to the bathroom, listens a moment, knocks softly.

BRUTAL
Paul? Prisoner.

PAUL (O.S.)
Chris' Gimme a minute.

Brutal waits patiently, a bit embarrassed. He finally hears a THIN TRICKLE, accompanied by a stifled groan of pain.

BRUTAL
You all right in there?

PAUL (O.S.)
For a man pissing razor blades.

The door opens, revealing Paul's pale and sweaty face.

BRUTAL
You should'a took the day off, gone to see the doctor.

PAUL
With a new arrival? You know better. Besides, it's not as bad as it was. I think it's clearing up.

They hear the truck HONKING as it rumbles up outside. Paul gives them a nod to resume their positions. Paul walks down the Mile, passing the cells where two inmates reside -- the first is ARLEN BITTERBUCK, a Washita Cherokee; the second is EDUARD DELACROIX ("DEL"), a skinny Cajun.

DEL
New boy coming in, boss?

PAUL
Never you mind, Del, you just keep your nose quietly on your business.

Paul arrives at the end of the Mile, takes up a position at an empty cell. (Down at this end, past the cells, is E Block's version of the "hole" -- a padded room where violent inmates are sent to cool off. It isn't used very often...in fact, at the moment, it's doubling as storage space.)

BRUTAL

peers out the viewing slot as the truck stops outside.

BRUTAL
Damn, they're riding on the axle. What'd they do, bust the springs?

GUARDS PERCY WETMORE AND HARRY TERWILLIGER OF E BLOCK emerge from the back of the truck and step down, turn back...

TIGHTER ANGLE ON BACK OF TRUCK

We get our first glimpse of the new inmate as a pair of GIGANTIC BLACK FEET step down into the yard...and the rear of the truck bounces back up on its springs where it belongs.

(CONTINUED)

BRUTAL

sees what's coming, eyes widening slightly.

BRUTAL
Paul? You might wanna reconsider getting in the cell with this guy.

PAUL
Why's that?

BRUTAL
He's enormous.

PAUL
Can't be bigger than you.

Brutal tosses him a look -- just wait. He swings the door open in a hot flood of daylight, giving us our first good look at:

JOHN COFFEY

is a <u>huge</u> black man, nearly 7 feet tall and 300 pounds, his massive head shiny and bald, his skin a tapestry of old scars, his prison overalls (the biggest size they had) ending at mid-calf. He looks dull and confused, as if wondering where he is and how he got there. Percy and Harry lead him toward E Block in shackles. Percy's got his hickory baton out of its custom-made holster, hollering:

PERCY
Dead man walking! Dead man walking here!

INSIDE THE CELLBLOCK

Paul can't see them approach from where he stands, but he can certainly hear Percy:

PAUL
Jeezus, pleeze-us, what the hell's he yelling about?

Up by the door, Brutal just rolls his eyes. Percy is the first one through the door, still hollering...

PERCY
Dead man walking!

...then Coffey enters, ducking low to get through, his shadow blotting out Brutal and Dean as his massive frame fills the door. Everything hangs suspended for a moment, a look of "holy shit" written on everybody's faces. Percy keeps yanking on the big man's cuffs, leading him along with a cry of:

PERCY
Dead man walking! Dead man--

PAUL
Percy, that's enough.

Percy falls reproachfully silent. Paul doesn't dignify it, just motions for them to come on. The procession comes down the Mile, with Brutal and Dean bringing up the rear.

BRUTAL
You sure you wanna be in there with him?

PAUL
(looks to Coffey)
Am I gonna have trouble with you, big boy?

Coffey shakes his head slowly. Paul takes the clipboard of transfer papers from Harry, turns and enters the cell.

Coffey just stands outside the cell and waits, as if he doesn't understand the concept. Paul motions him to come on in. Coffey starts to comply, but Percy raps him smartly with the tip of his hickory baton to get him moving faster.

Coffey flinches, enters the cell. Paul stares angrily at Percy, who stands slapping his hickory baton against the palm of his hand like a man with a toy he's itching to use.

PAUL
Percy. They're moving house over in the infirmary. Why don't you go see if they could use some help?

PERCY
They got all the men they need.

PAUL
Why don't you just go make sure?
(off his look)
I don't care where you go, Percy, as long as it's not here at this very moment.

Percy flushes red, the baton hovering near his palm. He looks like he's about to say something, but thinks better of it and stalks angrily up the Mile instead...

...and sees Del at his bars, smiling. Infuriated, Percy swings his baton and smashes Del's fingers with a LOUD CRACK. Del jerks back, howling in pain:

DEL
OWW, GOD, HE BUS' MY FINGERS!

PERCY
Wiped that grin off your shitpoke face, didn't I?

PAUL
Goddamn it, Percy! Get the hell off my block!

Percy throws Paul a look of disdain -- your block, huh? He swaggers out. Del's on his knees, weeping from the pain:

DEL
Oww, damn, boss, he done bus' my fingers for true...

PAUL
We'll get it looked at, Del, now keep yourself quiet like I said!

Del falls silent, moaning over his hand. Paul turns to Coffey, who looks unsettled by all the commotion.

PAUL
If I let Harry take those chains off you, you gonna be nice?

Coffey nods. Harry enters to remove Coffey's shackles.

PAUL
Your name is John Coffey?

COFFEY
(deep and quiet)
Yes, sir, boss, like the drink, only not spelt the same.

PAUL
So you can spell, can you?

Coffey shakes his head. Harry steps out.

PAUL
My name is Paul Edgecomb. If I'm not here, you can ask for Mr. Terwilliger, Mr. Howell, or Mr. Stanton...those gentlemen there.
(beat)
This isn't like the rest of the prison. It's a quiet place, we like to keep it that way.

Coffey considers this carefully, puzzled.

COFFEY
It weren't me making all the noise, boss.

PAUL
(eyes narrowing)
You having a joke on me, John Coffey?

COFFEY
No, sir.

Paul sees he isn't joking, continues:

PAUL
Your time here can be easy or hard, depends on you. If you behave, you get to walk in the exercise yard every day. We might even play some music on the radio from time to time. Questions?

Coffey doesn't miss a beat, as if he's been waiting to ask:

COFFEY
Do you leave a light on after bedtime?

Paul blinks. It's the last thing he expected. Coffey smiles uneasily, as if they might think him foolish for asking.

COFFEY
Because I get a little scared in the dark sometimes. If it's a strange place.

Paul looks to his men. The guards are trading glances.

PAUL
It's pretty bright in here all night long. We keep half the lights burning in the corridor.

COFFEY
Cor'der?

Coffey looks confused. Paul points to the lights lining the ceiling of the Green Mile in wire mesh cages.

PAUL
Right out there.

Coffey nods, relieved. Then he surprises everybody by offering Paul his hand, as if to show proper manners. Paul hesitates, oddly touched, then surprises his men even more by accepting. Coffey's hand swallows his. Coffey shakes gently, lets go.

Paul steps from the cell. Brutal slides the door shut, locks it. Coffey stands a moment as if unsure what to do, then sinks onto the cot with his hands clasped between his knees. He looks up at Paul, his voice soft as a whisper:

COFFEY
Couldn't help it, boss. I tried to take it back, but it was too late.

Paul turns, leads his men up the Mile...

PAUL'S INNER OFFICE

...and they enter a few moments later. Paul is furious, but keeping a lid on his temper:

PAUL
Dean, run Delacroix up to the infirmary and see if his fingers are broken.

BRUTAL
Course they're broken, I heard the damn bones crack. Goddamn Percy.

HARRY
You hear what he was yelling when we brought the big dummy in?

PAUL
How could I miss it, Harry? The whole prison heard.

This makes Brutal snort, breaking the tension -- the others can't help smiling.

BRUTAL
You'll probably have to answer for sending him off the Mile. He's gonna cause you trouble over this, you mark me.

PAUL
I'll chew that food when I have to. Right now I wanna hear about the new inmate...aside from how big he is, okay?

BRUTAL
(smiles)
Monstrous big. Damn.

PAUL
Seems meek enough. Looks like they sent us an imbecile to execute.

HARRY
Imbecile or not, he deserves to fry for what he done. Here...

Harry tosses a pair of manila envelopes bound with rubber bands on the desk before Paul -- Coffey's file.

HARRY
...make your blood curdle.

CUT TO:

EXT - E BLOCK PRISON YARD - DAY

A small area reserved for inmates of the Mile, fenced-off from the main prison yard. Arlen Bitterbuck walks the perimeter under the watchful eyes of guard BILL DODGE.

We find Paul sitting by himself on the bleachers with Coffey's file on his knees, thoughtfully unwrapping his brown-bagged sandwich. PUSH SLOWLY IN as he begins to read...

EXT - DETTERICK FARM - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

...and we see Klaus Detterick walk from his house to the barn with a milking pail, a solitary figure against a brightening horizon. He disappears into the barn...

...and we hold for a long moment, the house silent b.g., chickens clucking and scratching in the front yard...

...<u>until a WOMAN'S SCREAM shatters the silence.</u> Klaus reappears, dropping the pail, running toward the house...

PAUL ON BLEACHERS

...as Paul turns the page, keeps reading...

INT - DETTERICK HOUSE - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

...and Klaus bursts in to find his wife MARJORIE absolutely frantic with terror:

KLAUS
WHAT? GOD SAKES, WHAT?

MARJORIE
THE GIRLS! THE GIRLS ARE GONE!

She drags him through the house to a screened-off porch area where their 12 year-old son HOWIE is pointing and shouting --

HOWIE
Papa! Papa, look! The blood!

-- and Klaus freezes there, stunned to see blood spattered on the floor and the screen door hanging off its hinges...

KLAUS
Oh my God.

PAUL ON BLEACHERS

...as Paul absently takes another bite of his sandwich, not really tasting it, keeps reading...

INT - DETTERICK HOUSE - DAWN (FLASHBACK)

...plunging us back into screaming chaos: Klaus grabbing up shotgun shells, Howie loading the .22 rifle he got for Christmas, Marjorie sobbing incoherently...

KLAUS
GODDAMN IT, WOMAN, GET ON THE PHONE NOW! YOU TELL 'EM WE HEADED WEST! MIND WHAT I'M SAYING! WEST, Y'HEAR?

...and she goes stumbling through the house, grabbing for the phone up as her men disappear toward the porch b.g.:

MARJORIE
Central! Central, are you on the line? Oh, God, please, somebody took my little girls...

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Klaus and his son race from the house, following spatters of blood across the yard...

PAUL ON BLEACHERS

...as Paul lets out a long breath, turns the page...

EXT - COUNTRY ROAD/FIELD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

...and we see CARS AND TRUCKS pulling up, MEN jumping out with rifles, pouring down the incline toward the field where Klaus is hollering and waving his arms. Deputy McGee comes sliding down from the road, taking charge at the top of his lungs --

McGEE
I WANT ALL THE WEAPONS UNLOADED, Y'HEAR? TAKE OUT YOUR SHELLS, I WON'T HAVE A MAN SHOT BY ACCIDENT TODAY! BOBO, WHERE THEM DOGS?

-- and the dogs come bounding out of the back of a truck, howling down the incline to lead the chase...

VARIOUS ANGLES

...which takes us through the cattails and bulrushes...to the spot where Klaus finds the little scrap of pale yellow fabric, turns and screams...

KLAUS
Oh, Lord, this belongs to my Katie...

...and they keep going, stopping abruptly as they find: A blood-drenched area of trampled grass. A little girl's bloody nightgown hangs in the low branches of a tree. Some of these strong men look like they might throw up or faint at the sight of it. Their blood freezes in their veins as an INHUMAN HOWLING commences up ahead. It's like nothing they've ever heard before, raising the hackles of men and dogs alike.

PAUL ON BLEACHERS

...as Paul quietly turns another page, shaking his head...

PAUL
Jesus.

EXT - FIELD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The men reload their weapons. Everybody's terrified. McGee starts off, the others following his lead toward --

THE RIVER

-- where they emerge from the treeline, drawing ever closer to the source of that INHUMAN HOWLING...

...and they stop, gazing in horror:

John Coffey sits on the riverbank in bloody overalls, his huge feet splayed out before him. He's making that inhuman howling sound, face twisted in monstrous grief, pausing occasionally to take in a great hitching breath of air.

Curled in his massive arms are the naked bodies of Detterick's 9 year-old twin girls, their once-blonde hair now matted to their heads with blood.

A tableau. The men staring. John Coffey howling. A train puffing smoke across the landscape.

Klaus Detterick breaks the moment, lunging down the riverbank in a headlong rush. The others try to grab him, but he shrugs them off and throws himself on Coffey with a scream of inarticulate rage, kicking and punching, fists flying. Coffey barely seems to notice.

The others catch up with Klaus, drag him off. He falls to his knees on the riverbank, sobbing into his hands. Howie runs to him, throws himself into his father's arms. They hug each other tightly, overwhelmed with grief.

A semblance of quiet descends, except for Coffey's heartbroken wailing. A ring of rifle-toting men forms around him, though he hardly seems aware of it. McGee steps forward, uncertain:

McGEE
Mister.

Coffey goes quiet at once, eyes still streaming tears.

McGEE
Mister? Can you hear me?
(Coffey nods)
You have a name?

COFFEY
John Coffey. Like the drink, only not spelt the same.

McGee hunkers carefully down, watching for any sudden moves.

McGEE
What happened here, John Coffey? You want to tell me that?

COFFEY
I couldn't help it. I tried to take it back, but it was too late.

McGEE
(pause)
Boy, you are under arrest for murder.

McGee spits in Coffey's face...

PAUL ON BLEACHERS

...as Paul looks up with a slight start, jarred from his reading to find WARDEN HAL MOORES standing before him.

HAL
I interrupt?

PAUL
I'm just about done.

Paul stows the file as Hal settles onto the bleachers.

PAUL
How's that pretty gal of yours?

HAL
Melinda's not so well, Paul. Not so well at all. Got laid up with another headache yesterday. Worst one yet. She's also developed this weakness in her right hand.

PAUL
Doctor still think it's migraines?

Hal gives a slight shake of his head.

HAL
I'll be taking her up to Indianola next day or so for some tests. Head X-rays and the like. She is scared to death. Truth to tell, so am I.

PAUL
If it's something they can see with an X-ray, maybe it's something they can fix.

HAL
Maybe.

He pulls a letter, hands it to Paul.

HAL
This just came in. D.O.E. on Bitterbuck.

Paul glances toward Bitterbuck, scans the letter, nods.

PAUL
You didn't come all the way down here just to hand me a D.O.E.

HAL
No. I had an angry call from the state capital about twenty minutes ago. Is it true you ordered Percy Wetmore off the block?

PAUL
It is.

HAL
I'm sure you had reason, but like it or not, the wife of the governor of this state has only one nephew, and his name happens to be Percy Wetmore. I need to tell you how this lays out?

PAUL
Little Percy called his aunt and squealed like a schoolroom sissy.
(Hal nods)
He also mention he assaulted a prisoner this morning out of sheer petulance? Broke three fingers on Eduard Delacroix's left hand?

HAL
I didn't hear that part. I'm sure she didn't either.

PAUL
The man is mean, careless, and stupid. Bad combination in a place like this. Sooner or later, he's gonna get somebody hurt. Or worse.

HAL
You and Brutus Howell will make sure that doesn't happen.

PAUL
Easy enough to say. We can't watch him every minute, Hal.

HAL
Stick with it. May not be much longer. I have it on good authority that Percy has an application in at Briar Ridge.

PAUL
The mental hospital?

HAL
(nods)
Administration job. Better pay.

PAUL
Then why's he still here? He could get that application pushed through...hell, with his connections, he could have any state job he wants.

Hal has no answer. Paul looks off toward Bitterbuck.

PAUL
Tell you what I think. I think he just wants to see one cook up close.

Hal follows Paul's gaze, takes his meaning.

HAL
Well, he'll get his chance then, won't he? Maybe then he'll be satisfied and move on. In the meantime, you'll keep the peace?

PAUL
Of course.

HAL
Thank you, Paul.

Hal rises, slapping yard dust off his trousers.

PAUL
You give Melinda my love, okay? I bet that X-ray turns out to be nothing at all.

Hal walks off looking like he's got the weight of the world on his shoulders. Paul looks at the letter again...

TIGHT ON LETTER

...which is headed: "Date Of Execution."

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul is at the kitchen table in the wee hours of the morning, drinking buttermilk and listening to SOFT MUSIC on the radio. JANICE EDGECOMB appears, shuffling sleepily downstairs.

JAN
Paul?

PAUL
Hey, you. Music too loud?

JAN
No. There's just this big empty spot in the bed where my husband usually sleeps.

PAUL
He said to tell you he's having a little trouble with that tonight.

She comes into the kitchen, strokes his hair. There's an easy familiarity and a deep love between these two.

JAN
Worried about Melinda and Hal? Is that what's got you up?

PAUL
Yeah, that. Things.

JAN
Things.

She sits on his lap and gives him a crooked smile -- you're not getting off that easily.

PAUL
Got a new inmate today. Big, simple-minded fella.

JAN
Do I want to hear what he did?

PAUL
No. One sleepless member of this family's enough.
(softly)
The things that happen in this world. It's a wonder God allows it.

She gives him a tiny kiss above his left eyebrow, in that special spot that makes him prickle.

JAN
Why don't you come to bed? I've got something to help you sleep, and you can have all you want.

PAUL
Don't I wish. I've still got something wrong with my waterworks, I don't want to pass it on.

JAN
You seen Doc Sadler yet?

PAUL
No, because he'll want me to take sulfa tablets and I'll spend the rest of the week puking in every corner of my office. It'll run its course all by itself, thank you very much for your concern.

She kisses that spot above his eyebrow again. He smiles.

JAN
Poor old guy...

DISSOLVE TO:

IN TIGHT ANGLES: Copper plugs are cleaned, switches are oiled, circuits are tested...

INT - EXECUTION CHAMBER - NIGHT

...as maintenance is performed on Old Sparky by JACK VAN HAY and a small crew. Paul is carefully sanding a connector plug. Dean is waxing Old Sparky's wooden arms to a gleam.

Paul and Dean pause, thinking they hear a LAUGH drifting in from E Block...and then Brutal calls softly to them:

BRUTAL (O.S.)
Paul? Dean?

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT

Paul and Dean and enter to find Brutal trying not to wake the cons in their cells by laughing too loudly. They follow his gaze down the Mile, see nothing, turn to him like he's crazy.

BRUTAL
I guess the legislature loosened those purse-strings enough to hire on a new guard.
(off their looks)
Look again. He's right there.

Paul and Dean look again, and this time they see it:

A tiny brown mouse is coming up the Mile. It trots a short distance, peers right and left as if checking the snoring inmates in their cells, then makes another forward spurt.

PAUL
He's doing a cell check.

This gets them all trying not to laugh. The mouse draws ever closer. Dean starts to look worried.

DEAN
It ain't normal for a mouse to come up on people that way. Maybe it's rabid.

BRUTAL
Oh, my Christ. The big mouse expert. The Mouse Man. You see it foaming at the mouth, Mouse Man?

DEAN
(dubious)
I don't see its mouth at all.

That does it -- Paul and Brutal burst out laughing. The mouse

stops before them and peers up, curling its tail primly around its paws as if to wait. The guards fall silent, fascinated. Bitterbuck stirs in his cell, sits up to watch.

Brutal tears off a piece of his half-eaten corned beef sandwich, holds it delicately out with two fingers. The mouse rises up, appraising the morsel with shiny black eyes.

DEAN
Aw, Brutal, no! We'll be hip-deep in mice around here...

BRUTAL
(to Paul)
I just wanna see what he'll do. In the interests of science, like.

Paul shrugs. Brutal drops the scrap. The mouse grabs it and eats, sitting up like a dog doing a trick.

The mouse turns and scurries back down the Mile, vanishing under the restraint room door at the far end. Dean throws Paul an "I told you so" look.

DEAN
He's in the damn restraint room. You know he's gonna be chewing the padding out of walls and making himself a nice little nest.

Brutal gives Paul a sheepish look -- well? Paul sighs.

PAUL
All right. Let's get the damn mouse.

They stride grimly down the Mile to the restraint room door, men on a mission. Coffey's awake now, peering from his cot.

COFFEY
Saw me a mouse go by.

PAUL
It was a dream. Go back to sleep.

COFFEY
Weren't no dream. It was a mouse all right.

PAUL
Can't put anything over on you.

Paul unlocks the door, revealing a padded room filled with storage: cleaning supplies, buckets of paint, mops and ladders, you name it. Brutal shrugs off his jacket. Paul grabs

a mop from a steel bucket, hands it to Dean.

PAUL
Dean, watch the door. He tries to get past you, whack him.

DEAN
Brutal or the mouse?

BRUTAL
Har har, Mouse Man.

Brutal and Paul start doing the heavy lifting, muscling an unused filing cabinet out the door...

DISSOLVE:

...and they finally relay the last few heavy buckets of paint onto the Mile. Paul and Brutal catch their breath, scanning the empty restraint room. Their eyes go glaringly to Dean.

PAUL
You let him get past you.

DEAN
No I didn't, I was here all the time!

BRUTAL
Then where the hell is he?

They move slowly into the room, peering into every nook and cranny, utterly mystified. Brutal shakes his head.

BRUTAL
Three grown men. Outsmarted by a mouse.

DEAN
Well, bright side is, all this commotion probably scared him off for good.

PAUL
Yeah, that's right. That's the last we'll see of him...

FADE TO BLACK

IN BLACKNESS, A TITLE CARD APPEARS:

"The Mouse on the Mile"

CUT TO:

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

A low, static shot. Green floor stretching before us. Harry and Bill Dodge are at the desk b.g., doing paperwork and filing chores. Percy is idling nearby, whistling softly and combing his hair...

...and into this quiet shot, deep in foreground, creeps the mouse. He starts walking the Mile as before...

...right toward Percy.

COFFEY

stares through his bars as the mouse goes by...

PERCY

keeps combing his hair, unaware...

DEL

sits quietly picking his nose in his cell. The mouse appears outside the bars, cruising inexorably up the Mile. Del turns slowly, watches the mouse go by...

PERCY

still grooming himself, still unaware...

THE MOUSE

keeps coming closer. ANGLE UP to Bitterbuck peering through his bars, watching him go by...

PERCY

keeps working that comb -- and freezes at the sound of a TINY SQUEAK. His head swivels slowly...

...and there's the mouse. Staring at him.

That moment of eye contact reveals an enmity older than time itself. If mice have a natural enemy, Percy is it.

PERCY
You little son of a bitch.

Harry and Bill glance up from their work.

HARRY
Well, I'll be damned. There he is, big as Billy-be-frigged. I thought Brutal was pulling my leg.

BILL
That's a goddamn mouse.

HARRY
Yeah. Brute said he was in here last night begging for food, came right up to the desk.

BILL
My ass. Give him some room, Percy, see what he does.

Percy takes a few careful steps back, eyes never leaving the mouse. (Percy's hand starts easing toward the handle of his baton.) The mouse comes up to the desk as before.

HARRY
Brave little bastard, gotta give him that.

Harry breaks off a small piece of cracker and drops it. The mouse picks it up, starts to eat. (Percy's hand inches ever closer to his baton).

BILL
Here, lemme try.

Bill drops a piece of cracker. The mouse ignores it completely, keeping its beady little eyes on Harry. (Percy's hand starts easing his baton from its holster.)

BILL
Maybe he's full.

HARRY
(grins)
Maybe he knows you're just a floater. Gotta be an E Block regular to feed the E Block mouse, don'cha know...

Harry drops another piece -- and sure enough, the mouse starts to eat. Harry's smile fades. He and Bill trade a look.

HARRY
I was just kidding ab--

Percy lets rip a BELLOWING WAR CRY ("Yaaaahhh!") and launches his baton like a spear, scaring the crap out of everyone.

The mouse ducks (yes, actually ducks) and the baton sails over his head close enough to ruffle its fur, bouncing off the floor. Apparently remembering a pressing engagement elsewhere, the mouse takes off in a flash toward the restraint room.

Percy roars with frustration and takes off after it, trying to squash it with his heavy work shoes, leaping and stomping with great big galloping strides, missing the mouse by inches...

...and thus is the Green Mile traversed, with Percy stomping and hollering like a spastic flamenco dancer, the convicts yelling at their bars, the mouse zigging and zagging like Jim Thorpe heading for the endzone...

The mouse wins, zipping to safety under the restraint room door. Percy pounds his fist against the door in frustration:

PERCY
FUCK!

He fumbles his keys, unlocks the door, yelling all the while:

PERCY
I'M GONNA RIP YOUR DISEASED HEAD OFF, YOU LITTLE PIECE OF SHIT!

OUTSIDE E BLOCK

Paul and Brutal are arriving for work -- they pause, hearing PERCY'S YELLS drifting from the windows. The regular CONS in the yard are drifting curiously to the fence, wondering if a riot's brewing. Paul and Brutal take off running --

INSIDE E BLOCK

-- and rush in to find:

HARRY
Percy met your mouse.

Harry points. Percy's down at the far end, rummaging wildly in the restraint room, tossing shit out onto the Mile.

PERCY
It's in here somewhere! I'm gonna squish the little son of a bitch!

He starts muscling the filing cabinet out the door, kicking buckets out of his way. Brutal calls to him:

BRUTAL
Percy, we already tried that--

PERCY
What? Whad'ja say?

BRUTAL
I said--

Paul stops Brutal with a look -- don't you dare stop him.

BRUTAL
--uh, knock yourself out. Hope you nail the bastard.

Paul crosses his arms and smiles, leans back against the desk to wait...

DISSOLVE:

...and Percy hauls the last of the stuff out, exhausted. He steps back in and looks around, unable to believe there's no mouse cowering in the corner. Paul and the men approach, keeping straight faces, navigating the crap in the corridor.

BRUTAL
Gosh. Ain't in there, huh? Don't that beat the mousie band?

Percy keeps scanning the restraint room. The others all look to Paul, waiting for him to speak -- you're the boss.

PAUL
Percy. You want to think about what you were doing just now.

PERCY
(turns, glaring)
I know what I was doing. Trying to get the mouse. You blind?

HARRY
You also scared the living crap out of me and Bill. <u>And</u> them.

He cocks a thumb at the inmates in their cells.

PERCY
So what? They aren't in cradle-school, case you didn't notice...
(directed at Paul)
...although you treat them that way half the time.

BRUTAL
We don't scare 'em any more than we have to, Percy. They're under enough strain as it is.

PAUL
Men under strain can snap. Hurt themselves. Hurt others. That's why our job is talking, not yelling. You'll do better to think of this place like an intensive care ward in a hospital--

PERCY
I think of it as a bucket of piss to drown rats in. That's all.
(scans their faces)
Anybody doesn't like it can kiss my ass. How's that sit?

Brutal steps forward, wanting to slug the little bastard. Percy shies back, but keeps his bravado up:

PERCY
Try it. You'll be on the bread lines before the week is out.

PAUL
We all know who your connections are, Percy...
(steps close)
...but you ever threaten a man on this block again, we're all gonna have a go. Job be damned.

PERCY
Big talk. You done?

PAUL
Get all this shit back in the restraint room. You're cluttering up my Mile.

They turn and walk away, leaving Percy as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT

A SLOW TRACKING SHOT OF THE GREEN FLOOR takes us past a tiny scrap of bread...and then another scrap...and then past a mousetrap primed with a scrap of bacon...

...and we keep following a long trail of bread scraps and mousetraps until we come to Percy, alone on the Mile, carefully laying the last mousetrap down...

...and he scoots back against the desk to wait, crouched and holding his breath, eyes riveted to the restraint room door for any sign of his furry nemesis...

...and CAMERA BOOMS SLOWLY DOWN off his face, dipping down to floor level...

...<u>where the mouse is revealed under the desk,</u> peering in the same direction as Percy, wondering what the hell's so interesting down there. It hops further out to see...

ANGLE OF PERCY FROM FLOOR LEVEL

...and the mouse enters frame, hopping out a few more steps, mouse and man staring in the same direction.

A long beat. Percy turns, looks down at the mouse. The mouse turns, look up at Percy...

...and all hell breaks loose again. They race the Mile as before, Percy hollering and stomping all the way, mousetraps snapping and flying up into frame as they go charging wildly past the cells.

The mouse wins again. Percy pauses, furious...and sees Coffey staring at him from his cell.

COFFEY
Saw me a mouse go by.

Percy loses it, kicking and punching the restraint room door in a screaming rage as we

FADE TO:

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

Paul appears at Bitterbuck's bars with a group of guards.

PAUL
Arlen? Your daughter and her family are here.

Bitterbuck steps from the cell. Bill Dodge escorts him off the block. The moment they're gone:

PAUL
Let's move. I want at least two rehearsals before he gets back.

INT - VISITOR'S ROOM - DAY

Bitterbuck is led in. His DAUGHTER rises...an awkward hesitation...and she touches his face, kisses him. He takes her hands, kisses them, tries not to cry. The rest of the family is there: SON-IN-LAW, GRANDCHILDREN, COUSINS. They form around him, murmuring hellos, shaking hands...

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

...while TOOT-TOOT takes Bitterbuck's place in the cell. He's a wiry and toothless old trusty, crazy as a tick. He sits:

TOOT
Sittin' down, sittin' down, rehearsing now! Everybody settle!

He glances to Paul -- okay, hit it.

PAUL
Arlen Bitterbuck, step forward.

Toot springs to his feet and steps from the cell.

TOOT
I'm steppin' forward, I'm steppin' forward, I'm steppin' forward...

Toot turns, shows the top of his head to Dean.

PAUL
Is his head properly shaved?

DEAN
No, it's dandruffy and it smells.

PAUL
I'll take that for a yes. All right, Arlen, let's go.

Toot starts up the corridor, ringed by guards.

TOOT
I'm walkin' the Mile, I'm walkin' the Mile, I'm walkin' the Mile...

PAUL'S INNER OFFICE

Toot throws himself to his knees as soon as they enter:

TOOT
I'm prayin', I'm prayin', I'm prayin'. The Lord is my shepherd, so on an' so forth...

PAUL
Toot, you have to wait till I tell you to pray.
(Toot waits)
Okay, pray.

TOOT
Still prayin', still prayin'...

HARRY
Paul, we're not gonna have some Cherokee medicine man in here whoopin' and hollerin' and shaking his dick, are we?

PAUL
Well, actually--

TOOT
Still prayin', prayin', gettin' right with Jesus...

HARRY
Do it quietly, you old gink!

Harry slaps Toot upside the head to shut him up.

PAUL
As I was saying, I don't believe they actually shake their dicks, Harry. Be that as it may, Mr. Bitterbuck is a Christian, so we got Reverend Schuster coming in.

DEAN
Oh, he's good. Fast, too. Doesn't get 'em worked up.

PAUL
On your feet, Toot. You've prayed enough for one day.

TOOT
Gettin' to my feet, walkin' again, walkin' on the Green Mile...

EXECUTION CHAMBER

They enter. Brutal is waiting for them, gun drawn. Percy peers out from behind the partition wall from the switch room.

PERCY
What do I do?

PAUL
Watch and learn.

Paul motions Percy behind the wall. Percy sighs, takes his spot next to Jack Van Hay, peers through the wire mesh as Toot plops into Old Sparky, wriggling his skinny ass to get comfy.

TOOT
Sittin' down, sittin' down, takin' a seat in Old Sparky's lap...

Paul and Dean kneel to apply the ankle clamps. Brutal steps in from the side, pressing down on the condemned man's left arm to keep him in place until the ankle clamps are secure. Harry moves in from the other side, securing the right arm clamp.

TOOT
Gettin' clamped, gettin' clamped, gettin'--ow, shit, watch the skin!

Paul signals "ankles secure." Brutal holsters his pistol, applies the final clamp to the left arm.

BRUTAL
Roll on one.

BEHIND THE PARTITION

Van Hay mimes turning the generator knob up, whispering:

VAN HAY
"Roll on one" means I turn the generator up full. You'll see the lights go brighter in half the prison...

RESUME MAIN CHAMBER

as Brutal steps before the "condemned" and pronounces:

BRUTAL
Arlen Bitterbuck, you have been condemned to die by a jury of your peers, sentence imposed by a judge in good standing in this state. Do you have anything to say before the sentence is carried out?

TOOT
(gleefully)
Yeah! I want a fried chicken dinner with gravy on the taters, I want to shit in your hat, and I got to have Mae West sit on my face, because I am one horny motherfucker!

Brutal tries to hold on, but it's impossible -- he cracks up. Everybody falls apart, howling helplessly with laughter. Even Jack Van Hay is guffawing behind his partition.

Only Paul is reining it in -- he's a little too pissed to go with it. He waits until the laughing fit starts to pass, then:

PAUL
Shut up, Brutal. That goes for everybody. I want quiet in here.
(turns)
Toot, another remark like that, I'll have Van Hay roll on two for real.

BRUTAL
(beat, gently)
It <u>was</u> pretty funny.

PAUL
That's why I don't like it. Tomorrow night we're doing this for real. I don't want somebody remembering a stupid joke like that and getting going again.
(off their looks)
Ever try not laughing in church once something funny gets stuck in your head? Same goddamn thing.

BRUTAL
Sorry, Paul. You're right. Let's keep going. Harry...

Harry takes a black mask and snugs it down over Toot's head, leaving only the crown of his head exposed. Brutal takes a large sponge, dips it in a steel bucket, mimes soaking it...

BEHIND THE PARTITION

PERCY
What's with the sponge?

VAN HAY
You soak it in brine, get it good and wet. Conducts the electricity directly to the brain, fast like a bullet. You don't ever throw the switch on a man without that.

RESUME MAIN CHAMBER

as the sponge is placed atop Toot's head. Harry now lowers the steel cap and Brutal secures the straps.

BRUTAL
Arlen Bitterbuck, electricity shall now be passed through your body until you are dead, in accordance with state law. God have mercy on your soul.
(to Van Hay)
Roll on two.

BEHIND THE PARTITION

Van Hay mimes flipping the switch, looks to Percy:

VAN HAY
And that's that.

RESUME MAIN CHAMBER

Toot can't resist -- he starts starts bucking and flailing:

TOOT
Now I'm fryin'! Fryin'! Geeaaah!
Fryin' like a done tom turkey!

Paul rolls his eyes at Brutal. Brutal shifts his gaze past him and nods -- look behind you.

BRUTAL
One of the witnesses showed up a day early.

Paul turns. Sitting on the door sill, watching them with beady eyes, is the mouse. Paul turns back, addresses the room:

PAUL
All right, let's go again and do it right this time! Get that idiot out of the chair...

HIGH WIDE ANGLE OF EXECUTION CHAMBER

Brutal and Harry start undoing Toot's clamps. Everybody relaxes, drifting from their positions...

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME ANGLE AS ABOVE - NEXT NIGHT

...and the room is now quietly filling up with WITNESSES trickling in. People speak in whispers, if at all.

INT - BITTERBUCK'S CELL - NIGHT

Bitterbuck, the top of his head now shaved, is speaking quietly as Paul listens:

BITTERBUCK
You think if a man sincerely repents on what he done wrong, he might get to go back to the time that was happiest for him and live there forever? Could that be what heaven is like?

Paul doesn't think so -- but that's not what Bitterbuck needs to hear, so the lie comes easy:

PAUL
I just about believe that very thing.

Pause. Bitterbuck smiles.

BITTERBUCK
Had me a young wife when I was eighteen. Spent our first summer in the mountains. Made love every night. She'd just lie there after, bare-breasted in the firelight, and we'd talk sometimes till the sun come up.
(beat)
That was my best time.

Brutal appears at the door, checks his pocketwatch, nods to Paul. Bitterbuck takes a deep breath, getting himself ready.

PAUL
It'll be fine. You'll do fine.

INT - EXECUTION CHAMBER - NIGHT

THE SPONGE is pulled sopping wet from the bucket of brine, dripping a trail of water across the floor. Brutal places it atop Bitterbuck's head. Water courses down the sides of the condemned man's mask and neck, pooling on the floor.

The cap is lowered, the straps secured. All we hear now is the sound of Bitterbuck's BREATHING growing louder and faster under the mask...until, softly:

BRUTAL
Roll on two.

WHAM! The switch is thrown. Bitterbuck surges forward against the straps, riding the powerful current.

Some witnesses turn away. Paul and Brutal maintain grim eye contact with each other, waiting.

Behind the partition, Percy watches through the mesh with gleaming eyes, wishing he could see better.

Van Hay kills the current. Bitterbuck goes limp. A DOCTOR steps forward, checks for a heartbeat, shakes his head.

BRUTAL
Again.

The switch is thrown a second time. Bitterbuck surges forward again, riding the current all the way...

CUT TO:

INT - E BLOCK ACCESS TUNNEL - NIGHT

Bitterbuck's dead face stares up at us from a gurney. A hand reaches down, gives his cheek a squeeze. TILT UP to:

PERCY
Adios, Chief. Drop us a card from hell, let us know if it's hot enough.

Brutal knocks Percy's hand away, shoves him aside.

BRUTAL
He's paid what he owed. He's square with the house again, so keep your goddamn hands off him.

He draws the sheet over Bitterbuck's face, wheels the gurney down the tunnel. Percy throws a look to Paul.

PERCY
What's up his ass?

PAUL
You, Percy. Always you.

Paul brushes past him, but:

PERCY
You gotta hate the new boy? That the way it is around here?

PAUL
(turns back)
Why not just move on? Go to Briar Ridge.
(off his look)
Yeah, I know about it. Sounds like a good job.

PERCY
I might take it, too. Soon as you put me out front.

Paul cocks his head -- excuse me?

PERCY
You heard me. I want Brutal's spot for the next execution.

PAUL
(beat)
What's with you? Seeing a man die isn't enough? You gotta be close enough to smell his nuts cook?

PERCY
I wanna be out front, is all. Just one time. Then you'll be rid of me.

PAUL
If I say no?

PERCY
I might just stick around for good, make me a career of this.

Paul just shakes his head in wonder and walks away.

FADE TO:

INT - COFFEY'S CELL - DAY

Coffey's lying on his bunk, weeping quiet tears. He stirs at the sound of GIGGLING. He sits up, peers curiously through the bars. Softly:

COFFEY
Del?

AT THE GUARD STATION

Paul glances up from writing in the daily log. Silence now. He goes back to writing -- and the GIGGLING comes again.

PAUL
Delacroix? That you?

No answer. Just more giggling. Paul rises, walks down the Mile to Delacroix's cell -- and stops, staring in through the bars.

PAUL'S INNER OFFICE

Brutal and Dean are having lunch. Paul pokes his head in.

PAUL
You are not gonna believe this.

RESUME E BLOCK

The men follow Paul onto the Mile. By now, Del is CACKLING WILDLY in his cell. Brutal shoots Paul a look -- has he gone insane? Paul gestures "see for yourself."

They arrive at the bars...and find the mouse sitting on Del's shoulder. Del looks up, giggling like a kid at Christmas.

DEL
Look! I done tame me dat mouse!

PAUL
We see that.

DEL
Watch dis! Watch what he do!

He stretches out his left arm. The mouse crawls over the top of his head, scampers along his arm to the wrist, turns around and scampers back. The guards just stand there, staring.

DEL
Ain't he sumpthin now? Ain't Mr. Jingles smart?

PAUL
Mr. Jingles?

DEL
Dat his name. He whisper it in my ear. Cap'n, can I have a box for my mouse so he can sleep in here wi' me?

PAUL
I notice your English gets better when you want something.

DEL
Wanna see what else he do? Watch, watch, watch...

He puts the mouse on the floor, grabs a small wooden spool. The mouse sees it, poises like a man getting ready for a race.

DEL
We play fetch, Mr. Jingles? We play fetch?

He tosses the spool across the floor, bounces it against the wall. The mouse goes after it like a dog after a stick -- and proceeds to push it back to the bunk, rolling it with its front paws all the way to Delacroix's foot.

By now, the guards' jaws are hanging open. Paul's got a funny little chill running up his spine.

DEL
He fetch it ever' time. Smart as hell, ain't he? We do da trick again, watch, watch, watch...

Again he throws the spool. Again the mouse goes after it, starts rolling it back. Del howls with laughter, claps his hands like a kid. Brutal murmurs to the others:

BRUTAL
Who's training who here?

COFFEY
That's some smart mouse, Del. Like he's a circus mouse or something.

DEL
A circus mouse! Dat jus' what he is, too! A circus mouse! I get outta here, he make me rich, see if he don't!

He picks up the spool again, makes a drumroll sound, tosses it. The mouse does its thing, rolling the spool back...

...as Percy enters the scene. Del catches sight of him and scoops up his mouse, drawing fearfully back on his bunk. He tries to hide Mr. Jingles in his hands -- but the mouse wriggles from his grasp and scampers up on top of his head, where he regards Percy with mistrustful, beady mouse eyes.

PERCY
Well, well. Looks like you found yourself a new friend, Eddie.

Del tries to offer some defiance -- but all he can manage is:

DEL
Don' hurt him, 'kay? 'kay?

Percy shrugs as if to say "no skin off me," looks to Paul.

PERCY
That the one I chased?

PAUL
(level)
Yes, that's the one. Only Del says his name is Mr. Jingles.

PERCY
Is that so?

Paul trades a look with the others, everybody wondering just what the hell's going through Percy's mind.

PAUL
Del was just asking for a box. He thinks the mouse will sleep in it, I guess. That he might keep it for a pet. What do you think?

PERCY
I think it'll shit up his nose some night and run away, but I guess that's Del's lookout.
(beat)
We oughtta find a cigar box. Get some cotton batting from the dispensary to line it with. That should do real nice.

Percy walks away, leaving them dumbstruck. Paul turns to the others. Of all the things they've seen in the last few minutes, Percy being nice is the most amazing of all.

PAUL
Man said get a cigar box.

CUT TO:

INT - PRISON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

Paul comes up the stairs to the warden's office...

INT - WARDEN MOORES' OFFICE - DAY

...and enters to find Hal staring out the window.

PAUL
Hal? You wanted to see me?

HAL
Yeah. Paul. Close the door.

Hal's speech is halting, his thoughts disjointed and slow:

HAL
Uh. So you know. You got a new prisoner coming in tomorrow. William Wharton. Young kid. Wild as hell, judging from this...

He picks up the report, trying to focus his thoughts:

HAL
...been rambling all over the state last few years, causing all kinds of trouble. Finally hit the big time. Killed three people in a holdup, including a pregnant woman. Got "Billy the Kid" tattooed on his left arm...bad news all around...

He trails off, no longer able to focus on the words. Paul is shocked to see tears spill silently down his cheeks.

PAUL
Hal?

HAL
It's a tumor, Paul. A brain tumor.

Paul doesn't know what to say. Hal looks at him.

HAL
They got X-ray pictures of it. It's the size of a lemon, they said, and way down deep inside where they can't operate. They say she'll be dead by Christmas. I haven't told her. I can't think how. For the life of me, Paul, I can't think how to tell my wife she's going to die.

Hal Moores, one of the toughest and steadiest men you'd ever meet, starts to cry. He dissolves into great big gasping sobs, losing all control.

CUT TO:

INT - PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul lies awake, watching Jan sleep. He looks troubled -- not to mention feverish. It occurs to him how badly he has to pee. He sits up, clutching at a queasy stab of pain in his groin...

LIVING ROOM STAIRS

...and comes hurrying down the steps, clutching himself...

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

...and he's moving even faster as he exits the kitchen, racing for the outhouse. He realizes he's not going to make it, stops to piss near the woodpile at the corner of the house...

...and as he does, he's hit with the most stunning pain of his life. He buckles to his knees -- it's only his flailing hand against the woodpile that prevents him from going face-first into his own piss. He crams his other hand to his mouth in an enormous effort not to scream and wake his wife.

He manages to ride it out until his bladder empties. He falls onto his side, rolls over on the grass, and stares up at the sky with both hands pressed to his groin.

PAUL
...oh God...oh God...

FADE TO BLACK

IN BLACKNESS, A TITLE CARD APPEARS:

"Coffey's Hands"

CUT TO:

INT - PAUL'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Paul looks feverish and clammy as he buttons up his uniform jacket. Jan is packing his lunch, throwing him looks, knowing how sick he is.

PAUL
I'm going.

JAN
What?

PAUL
To the doctor. I'm going.
(off her look)
Today. Just as soon as we get the new inmate squared away.

JAN
That bad?

PAUL
Oh yeah.

She hands him his brown-bagged lunch, kisses his face.

CUT TO:

INT - BRIAR RIDGE MENTAL HOSPITAL - MORNING

We see a tattoo: "Billy the Kid." TILT UP to WILLIAM WHARTON staring out the window, wearing a hospital gown, his face utterly blank. He looks heavily medicated.

Harry, Dean, and Percy enter. Billy doesn't react, just keeps staring out. Harry waves his fingers in Billy's face.

HARRY
Boy's doped to the gills. Dean, hand me them clothes...

Dean relays some folded prison clothes to Harry.

HARRY
William Wharton? Hey! I'm talking to you! Put these clothes on!

Billy turns with a vacant look, takes the clothes. He fumbles with the shirt, drops the pants. Harry and Dean sigh. They strip Billy's hospital gown off and proceed to put the shirt on him, guiding his limp arms through the sleeves.

PERCY
Hellraiser, huh? Looks more like a limp noodle to me. Hey! Hey, you!

Billy looks up, meets Percy's eyes.

PERCY
You been declared competent! Know what that means? Means you're gonna ride the lightning, son!

Percy does a quick impression of a man jittering and jerking in the electric chair.

PERCY
Bzzzzzzzzt-zap! Just like that! How's it feel to know you're gonna die with your knees bent?

DEAN
C'mon, Percy, give us a hand.

Laughing, Percy picks up the pants. They proceed to help Billy into them one leg at a time...

CUT TO:

INT - E BLOCK TOILET - DAY

Paul is trying to piss. Except for a few drops hitting the bowl, excruciating pain seems to be the only result. He gives up, grabs a towel, wipes the sweat from his feverish face...

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

...and steps gingerly from the toilet. Del's watching.

DEL
Don' look so good, boss. Look like you runnin' you a fever.

Paul shoots him a baleful look -- no kidding. Another voice calls softly from further down the Mile:

COFFEY (O.S.)
Boss Edgecomb? Needs ta see you down here, boss.

PAUL
Got things to tend to just now, John Coffey. You be still in your cell now, y'hear?

Coffey falls silent. Paul goes to the entrance door and peers through the viewing slot, anxious to have this over with...

EXT - COLD MOUNTAIN PENITENTIARY - DAY

The prison truck appears, swaying along the rutted road...

IN THE TRUCK

...while Billy Wharton stares at nothing, drool dripping from his slack mouth in long strings.

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

Paul watches the truck pull in. He draws away from the slot, proceeds toward the empty cell which used to be Bitterbuck's...

ANGLE ON TRUCK

The rear doors are swung open. Harry emerges. Dean and Percy are guiding Billy by the arms, helping him down...

INSIDE E BLOCK

Paul waits at the empty cell. ANGLE PANS TIGHT to Coffey at his bars, eyes widening in a blossoming of some nameless fear or dread. Something bad's coming. A whisper:

COFFEY
Careful.

OUTSIDE E BLOCK

Billy is brought to the door. Dean pulls his keys, starts to unlock it. We PUSH IN on Billy's face, where the tiniest trace of a smile is starting to grow...

INSIDE E BLOCK

...and Coffey's unease grows with it. He presses his face to the bars, his whispering becoming more urgent:

COFFEY
Careful. Careful.

Paul hears him, glances back with a puzzled look. Coffey's gaze is directed at the door, which is being unlocked...

THE DOOR

...and opened. In that moment, the slack look on Billy's face gives way to a wild grin. A CRAZED SCREECH leaps from his throat, a cross between a rebel yell and a dog being tortured, freezing everybody's blood in their veins --

BILLY
Yeeeeeehaaaawwwwwwroooooo!

-- and he drops his wrist-chain down over Dean's head, jerks it tight, begins to strangle him. Dean lurches forward, Billy riding/propelling him through the door onto the Mile.

Percy stands frozen in the doorway, stunned. Harry shoves him aside and jumps on Billy from behind, trying to get him off Dean. Dean is choking, turning purple.

Paul rushes from the cell to join the fray. Billy whirls, delivering a stunning kick to Paul's groin. Paul's bladder pain goes nuclear -- he falls back in agony, clutching himself and sucking air through his teeth, unable even to scream.

Billy rams an elbow into Harry's face, knocks him sprawling on the desk, screaming and laughing and howling all the while:

BILLY
WHOOOEE, BOYS! AIN'T THIS A PARTY, NOW? IS IT, OR WHAT?

Paul forces himself to his feet, pulls his revolver, draws down on Billy...

PAUL
LET HIM GO!

...but Billy jerks Dean around, using him as a shield...

BILLY
G'WAN, SHOOT! SEE WHO YA HIT!

Dean is choking, dying. Paul is shifting his aim, trying for a clear shot, not getting one. Percy's still just inside the doorway, pressed against the wall with fear...

PAUL
HIT HIM, PERCY! GODDAMN IT, HIT HIM!

BILLY
C'MON, PERCY, HIT ME! HIT ME, YOU LIMP NOODLE, HIT ME! YEEHAWWW!

...and suddenly a hand comes in, grabs the hickory stick out of Percy's grasp, raises it high --

-- it's Brutal coming through the door. He swings the baton and lands an awesome blow to Billy's head -- THUMP! The force of it spins Billy off his feet and slams him flat on his back.

Dean crawls away, gulping ragged breaths of air. Amazingly, Billy's still conscious -- he looks up at Brutal and laughs:

BILLY
Big fucker. Snuck up on me. No fair.

Still laughing, he makes another grab at Dean. Brutal whacks him again, turning his lights out for good. Brutal drops to Dean's side, helping him hack air back into his lungs:

BRUTAL
Breathe...breathe...that's it...

Everybody's reining in their adrenalin. Paul glares at Harry.

HARRY
We thought he was doped.
(to Percy)
Didn't we? Didn't we all of us think he was doped?

Percy nods, still numb. Paul is furious:

PAUL
You didn't ask? I guess that's not a mistake you'll be needing to make again anytime soon, is it?

Harry shakes his head miserably. Paul grabs Billy by the feet.

PAUL
Grab his arms! You too, Percy!
(off Percy's hesitation)
Percy, goddamn it, get your feet out of cement and help us out here!

Percy finally unfreezes. The three of them hoist Billy up in a dead-lift, get him in his cell, toss him on the cot. They step out, slam the door, lock it. Paul looks to Harry and Brutal.

PAUL
Get Dean looked at right away, make sure he's all right. Percy, you go make a report to the warden for me. Start off by saying the situation is under control -- it's not a story, he won't appreciate you drawing out the suspense.

BRUTAL
What about you? You look about ready to collapse.

PAUL
I've got the Mile till you all get back. Go on, now.

They all exit. As soon as he's alone, Paul gives in to the pain, holding his crotch and sinking to his knees with a moan. It's so bad he actually lays down on the Mile, face pressed against the cool linoleum, wishing he were dead. A stretch of silence...and then:

COFFEY (O.S.)
Boss? Needs ta see ya down here.

PAUL
This is not a good time, John Coffey. Not a good time at all.

COFFEY (O.S.)
But I needs ta see ya, boss. I needs ta talk t'ya.

Paul sighs. Things couldn't get much worse than this. He rises with a supreme effort, walks painfully down the Mile...

COFFEY'S CELL

...and finds Coffey waiting at his bars.

COFFEY
Closer.

PAUL
I'm alone here right now, John. Figure this is close enough.

COFFEY
Boss, please. I got to whisper in your ear.

Paul blinks. Maybe it's the fever clouding his brain, or maybe...hell, is this what being hypnotized is like? He tries to shake the sensation off, comes a little closer.

DEL
Boss? You know you not s'pose to do dat.

PAUL
Mind your business, Del. What do you want, John Coffey?

COFFEY
Just to help.

His hand shoots out, grabs Paul by the collar, jerks him close. Paul makes a panic-grab for his revolver...

...but Coffey lays his free hand atop Paul's, eases his grip from the gun -- no need for that. Coffey's hand then drifts slowly down, easing to Paul's crotch...

PAUL
(stunned, frozen)
What are you...doing?

...and something goes WHUMP through Paul's body. He arches back with his mouth agape and arms outstretched as a rush of energy seems to pass from Paul through Coffey's hand...

...and then it's over. Paul comes back to the real world, weak against the bars, realizes Del is hollering in his cell:

DEL
HELP! HELP! JOHN COFFEY'S KILLING BOSS EDGECOMB! HELP!

PAUL
Del, Chrissake, settle down, I'm fine...

It dawns on him that he really <u>is</u> fine. Fever's gone. So is the pain in his groin. John Coffey, though, seems to be having trouble. He sits down on his bunk and bends forward, gagging like a man with a chicken bone caught in his throat.

PAUL
John? John, what's wrong?

Paul fumbles his keys to the lock, unsure if he should open the door, watching the big man's contortions grow stronger like a cat trying to cough up a hairball...

...and then comes an unpleasant, gagging/retching sound as Coffey's lips draw back from his teeth in a kind of godawful sneer...<u>and he exhales a cloud of what look like tiny black insects.</u> They swirl furiously in front of his face, turn white...and disappear. Paul just stares, stunned. Softly:

PAUL
What did you do, big boy? What did you do to me?

COFFEY
I helped it. Didn't I help it?

PAUL
Yes, but...<u>how?</u>

Coffey shrugs -- it's something that just <u>is.</u>

COFFEY
Just took it back, is all. Awful tired now, boss. Dog tired.

He rolls onto his bunk, faces the wall. Paul just stares at him, stunned. He turns and walks up the Mile, his stiffness and pain now gone. Del watches him go by, also stunned:

DEL
What dat man do to you? He throw some gris-gris on you?
(off Paul's look)
You look diff'int! Even walk diff'int! Like y'all better!

PAUL
You're imagining things. Lie down, Del. Get you some rest.

Paul continues up the Mile...

E BLOCK TOILET

...and steps back into the toilet. Not trusting this situation for even a moment, Paul opens his fly, takes a deep breath to prepare himself for the pain, starts to pee...

...and we hear a healthy stream of water hitting the bowl. The look on Paul's face says it all -- blessed relief.

CUT TO:

INT - PAUL'S HOUSE - DUSK

Paul comes home from work, still looking numb about the whole thing. He drifts to the kitchen door. Jan's at the counter, slicing vegetables for dinner. She glances at him.

JAN
Hi, honey. How are you feeling?

PAUL
Um...not too bad.

She turns back. Paul's eyes drift down to admire her ass.

JAN
What did the doctor say?

No response. He's too busy staring. She turns again -- he glances hastily up.

PAUL
Oh, you know doctors. Gobble-de-gook, mostly.

She turns back, keeps working. He crosses the room, eyeing her ass all the way...and surprises her by pressing up against her from behind, running his hands along her hips.

JAN
Paul? What are you doing?

He starts laying kisses on the back of her neck, giving her pleasant shivers, murmuring:

PAUL
What's it feel like?

JAN
I know what it <u>feels</u> like...it feels great...but...Paul...

He's getting her breathless. She turns into his arms and they get into some passionate kissing. It's not long before they're frantically peeling each other's clothes off...

INT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

...and we find them having a wild tumble in the sheets, both moaning and groaning, sweating and panting. She pushes him flat on the bed, pauses to catch her breath...

JAN
Those must've been some pills.

...and they keep going, rutting like crazed weasels...

EXT - HOUSE - NIGHT

...as their moans go drifting into the night...

FADE TO:

SAME ANGLE AS ABOVE - DAWN

...and they're <u>still</u> moaning up there as the sun creeps up.

INT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Jan falls back, exhausted after the latest go-round. She catches her breath, looks over at Paul, and finally:

JAN
Paul? Not that I'm complaining. But we haven't gone four times in one night since we were nineteen.
(off his look)
You wanna tell me just what the hell's going on?

PAUL
Well...thing is...I never actually got to the doctor yesterday...

She gives him a look -- oh?

CUT TO:

INT - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Paul is on the phone:

PAUL
Brutal? Listen...I'm thinking of taking the morning off sick. You cover the fort for me?
(beat)
That's swell. Thanks. Yeah, I'm sure I'll feel better. Okay.

He hangs up, turns to Jan.

JAN
You sure you ought to do this?

PAUL
I'm not sure what I'm sure of.

CUT TO:

EXT - ROAD TO TEFTON - DAY

Paul's Model T comes putt-putting up the road past a sign: "Trapingus County Welcomes You."

EXT - HOUSE IN TEFTON - BACK PORCH - DAY

BURT HAMMERSMITH, public defender for Trapingus County, sits with a cold soda and a magazine, watching his TWO CHILDREN playing on a swing at the far end of the backyard. The screen door opens and CYNTHIA HAMMERSMITH ushers Paul out.

CYNTHIA
I offer you a cold drink?

PAUL
Yes, ma'am, a cold drink would be fine. Thank you.

She goes back inside. Burt rises.

PAUL
Mr. Hammersmith. Your office said I'd find you at home today. I hope I'm not troubling you.

BURT
That depends, Mr.--?

PAUL
Paul Edgecomb. I'm the E Block superintendent at Cold Mountain.

BURT
The Green Mile. I've heard of it. Lost a few clients your way.

PAUL
That's why I'm here. I'd like to ask you about one of them.

Burt settles back down, motions "please sit."

BURT
Which client? Now you got my curiosity aroused.

PAUL
John Coffey.

BURT
Ah, Coffey. He causing you problems?

PAUL
No, can't say he is. He doesn't like the dark. He cries on occasion. Other than that...

BURT
Cries, does he? Well, he's got a lot to cry about, I'd say. You know what he did.

PAUL
(nods)
I read the court transcripts.

Cynthia reappears, hands Paul a cold root beer.

PAUL
Thank you, Missus.

CYNTHIA
My pleasure. Kids! Lunch is about ready! Y'all come on up!

She goes back inside, but the kids aren't quite able to tear themselves away from their play.

BURT
What exactly are you trying to find out? Satisfy my curiosity, I'll see if I can satisfy yours.

PAUL
I've wondered if he ever did anything like that before.

BURT
Why? Has he said anything?

PAUL
No. But a man who does a thing like that has often developed a taste for it over time. Occurred to me it might be easy enough to follow his backtrail and find out. A man his size, and colored to boot, can't be that hard to trace.

BURT
You'd think so, but you'd be wrong. Believe me, we tried. It's like he dropped out of the sky.

PAUL
How do you explain that?

BURT
We're in a Depression. A third of the country's out of work. People are drifting by the thousands, looking for work, looking for that greener grass. Even a giant like Coffey wouldn't get noticed everywhere he goes...not until he kills a couple of little girls.

PAUL
He's...strange, I admit. But there doesn't seem to be any real violence in him. I know violent men, Mr. Hammersmith. I deal with 'em day in and day out.

Burt smiles, realizing:

BURT
You didn't come up here to ask me whether he might have killed before. You came up here to see if I think he did it at all. That's it, isn't it?

PAUL
Do you?

BURT
One seldom sees a less ambiguous case. He was found with the victims in his arms. Blurted out a confession right then and there.

PAUL
Yet you defended him.

BURT
Everyone is entitled to a defense.

Cynthia hollers from an open window:

CYNTHIA
Kids! Lunch!

BURT
Y'all listen to your Momma, now!

The kids start this way. Burt turns back to Paul.

BURT
Tell you something. You listen close, too, because it might be something you need to know.

PAUL
I'm listening.

BURT
We had us a dog. No particular breed, but gentle. Ready to lick your hand or fetch a stick. Just a sweet mongrel, you know the kind.
(Paul nods)
In many ways, a good mongrel dog is like your negro. You get to know it, and often you get to love it. It is of no particular use, but you keep it around because you think <u>it</u> loves <u>you.</u> If you're lucky, Mr. Edgecomb, you never have to find out any different. My wife and I were not so lucky. Caleb. Come here for a second.

The little boy comes to him, staring at his feet. Burt tries to raise the boy's chin. The boy resists for a moment...

BURT
Please, son.

...and then his face comes around. He's horribly scarred on that side, the eye missing.

BURT
He has the one eye. I suppose he's lucky not to be blind. We get down on our knees and thank God for that much, at least. Right Caleb?
(the boy nods shyly)
Okay, go on in now.

The boy races inside after his sister. Paul follows Burt's gaze off toward the rear of the property, where an unoccupied doghouse stands weathered and sad in the weeds.

BURT
That dog attacked my boy for no reason. Just got it in his mind one day. Same with John Coffey. He was sorry afterwards, of that I have no doubt...but those little girls stayed raped and murdered nonetheless. Maybe he'd never done it before -- my dog never bit before, but I didn't concern myself with that. I went out there with my rifle and grabbed his collar and blew his brains out.

PAUL
I'm sorry for your trouble.

Burt acknowledges the condolence with a gracious nod.

BURT
I'm as enlightened as the next man, Mr. Edgecomb. I would not bring slavery back for all the tea in China. I believe we have to be humane and generous in our efforts to solve the race problem. But we have to remember that the negro will bite if he gets the chance, just like a mongrel dog will bite if it crosses its mind to do so.
(beat)
Is Coffey guilty? Yes, he is. Don't you doubt it, and don't you turn your back on him. You might get away with it once or even a hundred times...but in the end...

He raises his hand, makes biting motions with his fingers.

BURT
You understand?

Paul says nothing. Burt gazes out again. Softly:

BURT
I'm gonna have to tear that old doghouse down one of these days.

CUT TO:

INT - PAUL'S MODEL T - DAY

Paul drives back to Cold Mountain, his heart conflicted...

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

...and he walks onto the Mile with a bundle wrapped in a dish towel. Brutal glances up from the desk, sniffing the air.

PAUL
No, it's not for you.

Paul continues down the Mile. Whatever he's carrying, the smell of it brings Del to his bars. Even Mr. Jingles comes skittering out of his cigar box, sniffing.

DEL
Oh. Oh my.

Paul arrives at Coffey's cell. Coffey's on his bunk facing the wall. His head comes around, drawn by the aroma. He sits up, wipes the tears leaking from his eyes, looks at Paul.

COFFEY
I'm smelling me some cornbread.

Paul speaks softly so the others can't hear:

PAUL
It's from my missus. She wanted to thank you.

Coffey nods thoughtfully, absorbing this notion. Then:

COFFEY
Thank me for what?

PAUL
You know. For helping me.

COFFEY
Helping you with what?

Paul motions discreetly to his crotch.

COFFEY
Ohhh.
(beat)
Was your missus pleased?

PAUL
Several times.

Paul hands him the bundle through the bars. Coffey takes it, uncovers the cornbread reverently, gazes back up.

COFFEY
This all for me?

Paul nods. Across the way, Del is pressing his face longingly through the bars while Mr. Jingles crawls on his shoulder.

DEL
Oh my. John. I can smell it from here. I surely can.

COFFEY
(looks to Paul)
Can I give some to Del?

PAUL
It's yours, John. You do with it as you please.

John carefully scoops a big chunk of cornbread out with his enormous hand, holds it through the bars to Paul.

COFFEY
Here's for Del and Mr. Jingles then.

BILLY
Hey! What about me? I'm'a get some too, ain't I?

Coffey looks to Paul -- do I have to?

PAUL
It's yours, John. As you please.

COFFEY
Well. Fine. I think I'll keep the rest, then.

He smiles like a big kid, digging in with his fingers. Paul crosses the Mile to Del's cell, hands him his share.

PAUL
Courtesy of the gentleman across the way.

DEL
Oh, John. So very fine of you. So very kind. Mr. Jingles t'ank you.

COFFEY
(mouth full)
...wel'cm...

BILLY
Hey! What about me? Don't you hold out on me, ya big dummy nigger!

Paul's temper flares -- he steps to Billy's cell.

PAUL
You'll keep a civil tongue on my block.

Beat. Billy spits in Paul's face and follows it up with a big grin -- what are you gonna do about <u>that?</u> Paul is seething as he wipes the spit off, but keeps his temper where it belongs.

PAUL
You get that one for free. But that's the last one.

Paul walks away. Billy laughs, hollering after him:

BILLY
That's it? Just that little bitty one? Guess I'll have to pay out for the rest, huh?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

Harry is walking the Mile, doing a cell check and jotting on a clipboard. He pauses, making a notation...

...<u>and a long stream of piss hits his leg.</u> Billy's at his bars, peeing on him. Harry jumps back, stunned. Billy howls with laughter, hosing his aim wildly from side to side.

BILLY
Yeehaaw! Good shot, weren't it? Oh, the look on your face!

Paul and Brutal come running. Harry's just flabbergasted:

HARRY
You believe this? Son of a bitch pissed on me!

BILLY
Hey, d'jall like that? I'm currently cooking some turds t'go with it! Nice soft ones! I'll have 'em out t'yall tomorrow!

Paul stays calm, turns to Brutal, nods at the restraint room.

PAUL
We've been looking to clear that room out anyway.

TIMECUT:

A STREAM OF GUARDS comes toting the last of the restraint room stuff past Billy's cell while he heckles them from the bars...

BILLY
Hey! Whassit now, movin' day? Y'all wanna come on in and dust a little? Y'can shine my knob for me while yer at it!

...and he pauses as Paul and Brutal step to the bars. Paul has a canvas straitjacket. Brutal pulls his nightstick.

BILLY
You can come in here on your legs, but you'll go out on your backs, Billy the Kid guarantee ya that.
(motions to Brutal)
C'mon, fuckstick. No sneakin' up on me this time. We'll go man to man, see who's the better fel--

Brutal unlocks the cell -- and sidesteps, revealing Harry pointing a fire hose. The hose erupts, driving Billy across the cell with bone-jarring force. They batter him half-senseless, then cut the water. Billy collapses in a heap.

Paul and Brutal drag him semi-conscious from his cell and get the straitjacket on him. He comes around as they draw the straps tight and pull him to his feet.

PAUL
C'mon, Wild Bill. Little walky walky.

BILLY
Don't you call me that! Wild Bill Hickok wasn't no range rider! He was just a bushwackin' John Law! Dumb sonofabitch sat with his back to the door and kilt by a drunk!

BRUTAL
Oh, my suds and body! A history lesson! You just never know what you're gonna get when you come to work every day on the Green Mile. Thank you, Wild Bill.

Billy lets out a scream of rage and throws himself at Brutal. Brutal, bored, shoves him back toward Paul, who then propels him down the Mile toward the open restraint room door. Billy sees where they intend to put him, resorts to pleading:

BILLY
Oh, not in there! C'mon now, I'll be good! Honest Injun I will! No! No! Ummmmhhhh...urg...ah!

He suddenly drops to the floor, bucking and jerking wildly, spewing drool. Harry's eyes go wide.

HARRY
Holy Christ, he's pitchin' a fit!

Paul reaches down and unceremoniously starts dragging Billy kicking and writhing the rest of the way.

PAUL
He'll be fine, boys. Trust me on this one.

Brutal helps Paul toss Billy headlong into the padded room. They slam the door...

RESTRAINT ROOM

...and Billy staggers to his feet in the straitjacket, inarticulate with rage, starts throwing himself against the door, screaming at the top of his lungs:

BILLY
ALL I WANTED ME WAS A LITTLE CORNBREAD, YOU MOTHERFUCKERS!

FADE TO:

INT - E BLOCK - NEXT DAY

Paul and Brutal unlock the restraint room. Billy looks up from the corner, pale and drained. Softly:

BILLY
I learnt my lesson. I'll be good.

CUT TO:

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

Billy's back in his cell, quiet for a change. Toot-Toot is outside the bars, mopping the floor. Billy notices a chocolate Moon Pie in Toot's shirt pocket.

BILLY
Pssss. Hey. Give'ya nickel for that Moon Pie.

Toot looks around. Nobody's watching, and a nickel's a nickel. He steps to Billy's bars, swaps the Moon Pie for the money.

Toot hurries away. Billy unwraps the Moon Pie, makes sure he's not being watched...and crams the entire thing in his mouth...

DISSOLVE:

...and here comes Brutal strolling the Mile, doing a cell check and jotting on a clipboard. He pauses, seeing:

Billy at his bars. Just standing there staring. His cheeks bulging way out. Brutal steps closer, fascinated...what the fuck is that? Billy waits until he's just a bit closer --

-- and he slams his fists against his own cheeks, propelling a disgusting spew of liquefied chocolate sludge into Brutal's face. Billy falls back onto his bunk, shrieking with laughter:

BILLY
Li'l Black Sambo, yassuh, boss, yassuh, howdoo you do?

BRUTAL
(beat, calmly)
Hope your bags are packed.

TIMECUT:

...and once again, Billy gets dragged to the restraint room, kicking and screaming all the way. They toss him in, slam the door. Brutal turns, still wiping traces of sludge off.

PAUL
The Moon Pie thing was pretty original. Gotta give him that.

Brutal nods. They walk away as we

FADE TO:

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

Paul and Brutal appear at Del's bars with Harry and Dean.

PAUL
Del, grab your things. Big day for you and Mr. Jingles.

DEL
Whatchoo talkin' bout?

PAUL
Important folks heard about your mouse, wanna see him perform. Not just guards, either. One of them's a politician all the way from the state capital, I believe.

Del swells with pride upon hearing this. He scrounges up Mr. Jingles' props, steps from his cell, looks to Harry and Dean.

DEL
You fellas comin'?

HARRY
We got other fish to fry just now, Del, but you knock 'em for a loop.

Del nods, beaming happily, looks to Coffey in his cell.

COFFEY
You knock 'em for a loop like Mr. Harry says, Del.

Brutal leads Del up the Mile, Paul and the others at their heels. Percy's at the duty desk. He smirks and rolls his eyes as Del goes by. The moment Brutal and Del are out the door...

...Toot emerges from Paul's office where he's been hiding.

PAUL
Let's move along briskly, folks. There's not much time.

Toot hurries down to take his place in Del's cell.

TOOT
I'm sittin' down, I'm sittin' down, I'm sittin' down...

INT - OFFICE/ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

A HALF DOZEN GUARDS are waiting. We find Bill Dodge fixing the tie of a fat good ol' boy named EARL.

EARL
Been sweepin' floors here ten years, never had to wear no damn tie before.

BILL
You're a V.I.P. today, Earl, so just shut up.

A KNOCK at the door. Everybody takes a seat. Del is ushered in by Brutal. Del faces his audience, puts his hands to his chest in a "thank you" gesture worthy of Lillie Langtry before her adoring public, then announces grandly:

DEL
Messieurs et mesdames! Bienvenue au cirque de mousie!

INT - EXECUTION CHAMBER - DAY

The steel cap is lowered over Toot's head, the straps tightened. TILT UP to Percy as:

PERCY
Roll on two.

Behind his partition, Van Hay mimes flipping the switch.

VAN HAY
That's that.

A pause. Percy looks anxiously to Paul, who's trading glances with the other guards. Finally:

PAUL
Very good. Very professional.

Percy smiles. Harry and Dean step up, slapping his back and shaking his hand...

INT - E BLOCK - DAY

...and they're still chatting a short time later, waiting for Del's return. Percy actually looks happy for a change, feeling genuinely accepted for the first time...

Billy is watching from his cell. Just watching.

The door opens. Del returns with Mr. Jingles on his shoulder, escorted by Brutal. Brutal is toting the cigar box and spool like a magician's assistant carrying the boss' props.

PAUL
Well?

DEL
They love Mr. Jingles! They laugh and cheer and clap they hands!

PERCY
Well, that's just aces. Pop back in your cell, old-timer.

The generosity of Percy's tone catches Del completely off guard. Del gives him a look of almost comical mistrust...

...and the old Percy comes back. He bares his teeth in a mock snarl and curls his fingers as if to grab Del. It's a joke, but Del doesn't know that -- he jerks back in fear and trips over Brutal's big feet. Del goes down hard, hitting the linoleum with the back of his head. Mr. Jingles jumps clear, goes squeaking down the Mile. Del sits up, painfully clutching his head. Brutal helps him up...

BRUTAL
Percy, you shit.

...and moves him toward his cell. Percy is actually moved to apologize -- he starts after them with a half-laugh, drifting much too close to Wild Bill's side of the Mile...

PERCY
Del! Hey, you numb wit, I didn't mean nothin' by it! You all ri--

...and Wild Bill's arms thrust out, grabbing Percy and slamming him back against the bars with an arm around his throat. Percy squeals like a pig in a slaughter-chute, thinking he's gonna die. The guards scramble, drawing their clubs -- as Billy strokes Percy's hair and whispers in his ear:

BILLY
Ain't you sweet. Soft. Like a girl. I druther fuck your asshole than your sister's pussy, I think.

Billy kisses Percy's ear -- and his hand drops down to squeeze Percy's crotch. Paul pulls his sidearm, taking aim...

PAUL
Wharton!

...and Billy lets go, stepping back with his hands raised, laughing. Percy darts across the Mile in terror and cringes against the cell opposite, breathing so loud and fast it almost sounds like sobbing.

BILLY
I let 'im go, I'us just playin' and I let 'im go! Never hurt a hair on his purty head!
(grins at Percy)
Your noodle ain't limp at all, loverboy! I think you sweet on ol' Billy the Kid...
(sniffs his fingers)
...oooh, but smell you.

Down at his cell, Del starts laughing shrilly. Everybody else starts to realize it, including Percy himself...he looks down, sees the huge dark stain spreading at his crotch.

DEL
Lookit, he done piss his pants! Look what the big man done! He bus' other people wid 'is stick, *mais oui* some *mauvais homme*, but someone touch him, he make water in his pants jus' like a baby!

Percy just stares. Brutal shoves Delacroix into his cell.

BRUTAL
Shut up, Del.

Paul steps to Percy, puts a hand on his shoulder. Percy shakes his hand off, looks around at their faces, whispers:

PERCY
You talk about this to anyone, I'll get you all fired. I swear that to God.

PAUL
What happens on the Mile, stays on the Mile. Always has.

The men nod solemnly. Nobody's going to talk about this. Percy looks at Delacroix still snorting in his cell, points at him.

PERCY
You keep laughing, you French-fried faggot. You just keep laughing.

Del falls silent. Percy turns and storms away as we

FADE TO BLACK

IN BLACKNESS, A TITLE CARD APPEARS:

"The Bad Death of Eduard Delacroix"

CUT TO:

INT - DEL'S CELL - DAY

Paul is sitting with Delacroix. Brutal is leaning against the bars. Del is throwing the spool. Mr. Jingles is fetching it.

The silence is thick. Just the clack-clatter of the spool, and the skitter-skitter of tiny mouse paws on concrete. It's getting on Paul's nerves in a big way. Softly:

PAUL
What about Dean? He's got a little boy would love a pet mouse, I bet.

Del looks horrified at the thought.

DEL
How could a boy be trust wid Mr. Jingles? Maybe forget to feed him. And how he keep up wid his trainin', just a boy, *n'est-ce pas?*

Del tosses the spool again -- clack-clatter, skitter-skitter.

PAUL
All right, I'll take him.

DEL
T'ank you kindly, *merci beaucoup,* but you live out in the woods, and Mr. Jingles, he be scared to live out *dans la foret.*

PAUL
He whisper that in your ear?

Del nods, tosses the spool again -- clack-clatter, skitter skitter. Paul is completely out of ideas. But then:

BRUTAL
How about Mouseville?

DEL
Mouseville?

BRUTAL
Tourist attraction down in Florida. Tallahassee, I think. Is that right, Paul? Tallahassee?

PAUL
(level)
Yeah, that's right. Tallahassee. Just down the road apiece from the dog university.

Brutal's mouth twitches, but he manages to keep a straight face. He gives Paul a look -- don't blow this.

BRUTAL
You think they'd take Mr. Jingles? You think he's got the stuff?

PAUL
Might. He's pretty smart.

DEL
Hey! What dis Mouseville?

BRUTAL
Tourist attraction, I said. They got this big tent you go into--

DEL
Like a *cirque?* You have to pay?

BRUTAL
You shittin' me? Course you pay. Dime a piece, two cents for the kids. And inside the tent there's this mouse city made out of boxes and toilet paper rolls...

Percy is drifting up the block, listening too, but nobody's really paying him much mind.

BRUTAL
...plus they got the Mouseville All-Star Circus. There's mice that swing on trapeze, mice that roll barrels, mice that stack coins...

DEL
Dat's it! Dat's da place for Mr. Jingles! You gonna be a circus mouse after all! Gonna live in a mouse city down in Florida!

Del tosses the spool extra hard -- it takes a bad bounce off the wall and goes clattering through the bars onto the Mile. The mouse goes after it like a shot, too intent to notice:

His old enemy Percy.

BRUTAL
Percy, no!

Percy stomps the heel of his heavy work shoe down on Mr. Jingles. There's a SOFT SNAP as the mouse's back breaks.

Del screams in horror and throws himself at the bars, sobbing the mouse's name. Percy looks to Brutal and Paul, smiles.

PERCY
Knew I'd get him sooner or later. Just a matter of time, really.

He turns and strolls up the Mile, leaving Mr. Jingles dying in a tiny pool of blood. Up at the duty desk, Dean and Harry get up from a cribbage game, stunned and furious.

Percy strolls past, exits to the execution chamber. Del is still screaming, all his pent-up terror and grief pouring out at the dying mouse. And then comes a soft, urgent voice:

COFFEY
Give'm to me.

They turn. Coffey's got his arms out through his bars, one massive hand spread open.

COFFEY
Give'm to me. Might still be time.

Paul hesitates, scoops the mouse up off the floor, wincing at the feel of it. Splintered bones are poking at the hide.

BRUTAL
What are you doing?

Paul doesn't answer, just lays Mr. Jingles into Coffey's hand. Coffey pulls the mouse in through his bars and lays his other hand gently over it, cupping the creature. All we see now is the tail hanging out the side, twitching weakly.

BRUTAL
Paul, what the hell--

Paul motions him quiet. Del is pleading softly at his bars:

DEL
Please, John. Oh Johnny, help him, please help him, *s'il vous plait.*

Harry and Dean join the group. Everybody watching now.

Coffey puts his mouth to his cupped hands, inhales sharply. The world hangs suspended for a moment. Coffey raises his face, contorting as if desperately ill, starts making those horrendous choking sounds in his throat...

BRUTAL
(softly)
Oh, dear Jesus. The tail. Look at the tail.

They do. The tail is no longer weak and dying. It's snapping briskly back and forth, as if ready to play.

Coffey makes that retching/gagging sound...and again exhales a cloud of swirling black "insects" from his nose and mouth. The men watch, speechless, as the "bugs" turn white and disappear.

Coffey bends down, opens his hand. Mr. Jingles bounds off his fingers through the bars, racing past the guards' feet. They turn to see Del gather the mouse up, laughing and crying. Dean turns back to Coffey with a stunned whisper:

DEAN
What did you do?

COFFEY
I helped Del's mouse. He a circus mouse. Goan live in a mouse city down in...down in...

BRUTAL
(numb)
Florida?

Coffey nods, remembering.

COFFEY
Boss Percy's bad. He mean. He step on Del's mouse.
(softly)
I took it back, though.

And with that, he lies back on his bunk and faces the wall. The others look to Paul, don't even know what to say.

PAUL
Brute, come along with me.
(to Harry and Dean)
You fellas go on back to your cribbage game.

Harry nods numbly. Paul leads Brutal up the Mile...

EXECUTION CHAMBER

...and they enter to find Percy polishing Old Sparky's arms.

PERCY
Don't start in on me. It was just a mouse. Never belonged here in the first place.

PAUL
The mouse is fine. Just fine. You're no better at mouse-killing than anything else around here.

PERCY
You expect me to believe that? I heard the goddamn thing crunch.

Paul steps closer, angry as we've ever seen him:

PAUL
Aren't you glad Mr. Jingles is okay? After all our talks about how we should keep the prisoners calm? Aren't you relieved?

PERCY
What kind of game is this?

PAUL
No game. See for yourself.

Beat. Percy stalks past them, heads out onto the Mile. Paul and Brutal just wait, saying nothing. Brutal picks up the rag left by Percy, resumes polishing chores on Old Sparky. Paul strecthes, cracks his neck. The silence heavy...

...until Percy reappears:

PERCY
You switched them! You switched them somehow, you bastards!

BRUTAL
I always keep a spare mouse in my wallet for occasions such as this.

PERCY
You're playing with me, the both of you! Just who the hell do you think you are--

Brutal grabs him, slams him bodily into the electric chair. Paul bends close, gets right in Percy's face.

PAUL
We're the people you work with, Percy, but not for long. I want your word.

PERCY
My word?

PAUL
I put you out front for Del, you put in your transfer to Briar Ridge the very next day.

PERCY
What if I just call up certain people and tell them you're harassing me? Bullying me?

PAUL
Go ahead. I promise you'll leave your share of blood on the floor.

PERCY
Over a mouse? You think anyone's gonna give two shits?

PAUL
No. But four men will swear you stood by while Wild Bill tried to strangle Dean to death. About that people <u>will</u> care, Percy. Even your uncle the governor will care.

BRUTAL
Thing like that goes in your work record. Work record can follow a man around a long, long time.

Percy looks from one man to another, knowing he's trapped.

PAUL
I put you out front, you put in your transfer. That's the deal.

Percy thinks it over, nods. He tries to get up, but Paul keeps him pinned...and pointedly offers his hand.

PAUL
You make a promise to a man, you shake his hand.

Percy hesitates, shakes Paul's hand...

HIGH WIDE ANGLE OF EXECUTION CHAMBER

...and Paul pulls him out of the electric chair as we

DISSOLVE TO:

SAME ANGLE AS ABOVE - NEXT NIGHT

Witnesses are trickling in, filling the seats. A storm is brewing, sending FLASHES OF LIGHTNING across the floors.

INT - DEL'S CELL - NIGHT

Del sits with Mr. Jingles in his lap, stroking the mouse between the ears. Paul, Brutal, and Harry appear at the bars.

DEL
Hey, boys. Say hi, Mr. Jingles.

PAUL
Eduard Delacroix, will you step forward?

DEL
Boss Edgecomb?

PAUL
Yes, Del?

DEL
Don' let nothin' happen to Mr. Jingles, okay?

Paul nods -- I promise. Del rises, steps to Paul.

DEL
Here, take him.

Del lifts his hand. Mr. Jingles steps off onto Paul's shoulder with no hesitation. Gently:

PAUL
Del. I can't have a mouse on my shoulder while...you know.

COFFEY
I'll take him, boss. Jus' for now. If Del don' mind.

DEL
Yeah, you take 'im, John. Take him til' dis foolishment done -- *bien!*
(to Paul and Brutal)
After, you take him down to Florida? To dat Mouseville?

BRUTAL
We'll do it together, most likely. Maybe take a little vacation time.

Paul moves to Coffey's cell. The mouse skitters off Paul's shoulder onto Coffey's hand.

DEL
People pay a dime apiece to see him. Two cents for the kiddies. Ain't dat right, Boss Howell?

BRUTAL
That's right, Del.

DEL
You a good man, Boss Howell. You too, Boss Edgecomb. Wish I could'a met you bot' someplace else.

Del gives Mr. Jingles one last look, starts to cry.

DEL
Au revoir, mon ami. Je t'aime, mon petit.

And they start to walk the Mile...

EXECUTION CHAMBER

Sweltering in the damp heat. Rain is pissing down, drumming the tin roof. People glance up uneasily as THUNDER BOOMS. A FAT LADY is staring grimly at the electric chair.

FAT LADY
Hope he's good and scared. Hope he knows the fires are stoked, and that Satan's imps are waiting.

ANGLE ON DOOR

Del enters, horrified to see Percy waiting at Old Sparky. Paul gives Del's arm a reassuring squeeze, leads him forward...

IN A TIGHT SERIES OF SHOTS:

The clamps are applied. The straps drawn tight.

PERCY
Roll on one.

The lights brighten on a RISING HUM. Witnesses look up.

ON THE MILE

Coffey looks up as the overheads flare hotter and hotter, whispers to the mouse in his hands:

COFFEY
You be still, Mr. Jingles. You be so quiet and so still.

RESUME EXECUTION CHAMBER

PERCY
Eduard Delacroix, you have been condemned to die by a jury of your peers, sentence imposed by a judge in good standing in this state. You have anything to say before sentence is carried out?

Del tries to speak. Doesn't quite manage the first time. Licks his lips and tries again.

DEL
I sorry for what I do. I give anything to take it back, but I can't. God have mercy on me.
(whispers to Paul)
Don' forget 'bout Mouseville.

Paul and Brutal nod -- and are stunned as:

PERCY
No such place. That's just a fairy tale these guys told you to keep you quiet. Just thought you should know, faggot.

The stricken look in Del's eyes tells us a part of him had known all along. Paul and Brutal would both like to deck Percy right about now, and he knows it -- he gives them a "what are you gonna do about it" smile.

Nothing they can do. Paul nods to Harry, who takes the black mask from the back of the chair and rolls it down over Del's head, leaving the top of his shaved head exposed.

PERCY

takes the sponge and bends down to the bucket of brine. The others don't see it, but we do:

Percy only pretends to dip the sponge and soak it. It never touches the water. He straightens up and places the sponge atop Delacroix's head, hiding it with his hands.

The cap is lowered. Paul and the others haven't yet realized what's happened. THUNDER BOOMS and LIGHTNING CRASHES as Percy hides a smile, steps back to address the condemned:

PERCY
Electricity shall now be passed through your body until you are dead, in accordance with state law. God have mercy on your soul.

TIGHT ON PAUL

as realization starts to dawn. He stares at the bucket, then across the floor to Delacroix, coming to terms with the evidence of his eyes -- there's no water on the floor or dripping down the sides of Del's neck.

Paul's eyes widen. A stunned beat of horror. He starts to open his mouth to scream "NO!," but Percy beats him to it with:

PERCY
Roll on two.

Van Hay flicks the switch. WHAM! The electricity hits home and Del rocks forward, riding the current.

Then things start to go horribly wrong.

The HUMMING loses its steadiness and starts to waver with a CRACKLING SOUND. Tendrils of smoke begin curling from under the cap, a mixture of burning hair and sponge. Brutal shoots Paul a horrified look. Paul responds with a harsh whisper:

PAUL
It's dry!

Delacroix begins twisting and jittering in the chair, his masked face snapping violently from side to side, his legs pistoning up and down in his restraints.

There's a MUFFLED POP from under the cap, like a pine knot exploding in a hot fire. Smoke starts coming through the fabric of the mask, puffing upward. Del is being cooked alive. Paul spins to the partition, hollering --

PAUL
JACK!

-- but Brutal grabs his arm, whispers fiercely:

BRUTAL
Don't you tell him to stop. Don't you do it. It's too late for that.

Paul turns back, helpless. The other guards are trading wild looks, unable to believe what's happening. Even Percy looks aghast -- he was expecting something, but not this.

Del begins SCREAMING -- the wild, hysterical sound of an animal being shredded alive in a hay baler. The HUMMING goes uneven and ragged, the lights rising and falling...

ON THE MILE

...as Del's screams rise and fall with them, echoing up the corridor. Coffey's shaking and screaming too, as if feeling Del's pain. Mr. Jingles squirms out of his grasp and goes squeaking in terror toward the restraint room door...

BILLY
HE'S COOKIN' NOW! THEY COOKIN' HIM GOOD! NEAR ABOUT DONE, I RECKON!

RESUME EXECUTION CHAMBER

Wrong. Del's nowhere near about done. He's slamming back and forth in the chair hard enough to shake the platform, twisting hard against the leather restraints. We hear BONES BREAKING. A WOMAN SCREAMS. Witnesses start rising to their feet:

WITNESSES
What the hell's happening to him?...Are those clamps going to hold?...Christ, the smell!...Is this normal?

The mask bursts into flame on Delacroix's face. Van Hay hollers through the wire mesh, horrified:

VAN HAY
SHOULD I KILL THE JUICE?

PAUL
NO! ROLL, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE, ROLL!

Harry scoops up the bucket of water to throw it.

PAUL
No water! No water! You crazy?

Harry backs off with a look of dazed understanding -- you don't throw water on a man getting juiced. Right. He drops the bucket, races to get the chemical fire extinguisher instead.

The flaming mask peels away, revealing Del's charring face. His eyeballs are misshapen globs of burning white jelly blown out of their sockets. The ATTENDING DOCTOR faints dead away.

Pandemonium now in the room. People shouting and hurrying for the exit, chairs falling over, women screaming:

FAT WOMAN
Stop it, stop it, oh can't you see he's had enough?

Hal grabs Paul by the shoulder, spins him around.

HAL
Why don't you shut it down?

PAUL
He's still alive! You want me to shut down while he's still alive?

Hal is horrified at the thought. Del is jittering and screaming, rocking from side to side, smoke pouring from his nostrils and mouth, his tongue sizzling purple-black.

The witnesses are crowding and shoving to get out, but the back door is locked. All they can do is cluster there.

Paul sees Percy with his head turned away. He grabs him, forces his head around.

PAUL
You <u>watch,</u> you son of a bitch!

Harry steps up, the extinguisher in his hands. Waiting. Del finally slumps over. He's still vibrating, but now it's just the effect of current flowing through his body.

PAUL
Kill it!

Van Hay kills the current. The HUMMING DIES. Brutal grabs the extinguisher from Harry, shoves it into Percy's hands.

BRUTAL
You do it. You're running the show, ain't you?

Percy, sick and dazed, aims the extinguisher and hoses the smoking corpse. Hal is near the back, calming the crowd:

HAL
It's all right, folks, it's all under control. Just a power surge from the storm, that's all, nothing to worry about...

PAUL
Dean, get doc's stethoscope.

Dean drops to the doctor's bag, digs through it, hands up the stethoscope. Paul plugs them into his ears. People are moaning and sobbing at the back of the room:

MAN
Oh my God! Is it always like this? Why didn't somebody tell me? I never would have come!

Paul wipes some foam away from Delacroix's chest, places the stethoscope pad to the raw flesh. He nods to Brutal -- it's over.

CUT TO:

INT - ACCESS TUNNEL - NIGHT

Paul and the others bring the stretcher down, lay the corpse on the gurney. Percy starts stammering excuses:

PERCY
I didn't know the sponge was supposed to be wet--

Brutal hauls off and slugs him. A scuffle ensues as the others grab Brutal and pull him off.

PAUL
Brutal, no!

BRUTAL
What do you mean, no? How can you say no? You saw what he did!

PAUL
Delacroix's dead, nothing can change that, and Percy's not worth it!

BRUTAL
So he just gets away with it? Is that how it works?

Hal comes lunging down the stairs, furious:

HAL
What the fuck was <u>that?</u> Jesus Christ, three witnesses puked all over the floor up there! And the smell! I got Van Hay to open both doors, but that smell won't come out for five damn years, that's what I'm betting! And that asshole Wharton is <u>singing</u> about it! I can hear him!

PAUL
(quietly)
Can he carry a tune, Hal?

This pulls the plug on the moment -- Hal snorts, triggering laughter among the men, a wild release of tension and fear. Everybody starts feeling a bit saner again as it dies down:

HAL
Okay, boys. Okay. Now what the hell happened?

All eyes go to Percy. Hal turns, sees Percy's bloody lip.

HAL
Percy? Something to say?

PERCY
I didn't know the sponge was supposed to be wet.

Beat. A look of utter contempt from Hal.

HAL
How many years you spend pissing on the toilet seat before somebody told you to put it up?

PAUL
Percy fucked up, Hal. Pure and simple.

HAL
Is that your official position?

PAUL
Don't you think it should be?

Hal considers it, nods.

PAUL
He'll be putting in a transfer request to Briar Ridge tomorrow. Moving on to bigger and better things. Isn't that right, Percy?

Percy nods. Hal steps close, gives him a tight, icy smile.

HAL
You're a little asshole, and I don't like you a bit.
(off Percy's look)
Have that transfer request on my desk first thing.

Hal heads back up the stairs. Brutal shoves Percy aside and wheels Delacroix's body down the tunnel.

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT

Paul returns to find Wild Bill making up a song in his cell:

BILLY
(singing)
Barbecue! Me and you! Stinky, pinky, phew-phew-phew! Weren't Billy or Jilly or Hilly or Roy -- it was a French-fried faggot named Delacroix!

PAUL
You're about ten seconds away from spending the rest of your life in the padded room.

Billy falls silent. Paul continues down the Mile to Coffey's cell. Coffey's on his bunk, face streaked with tears. He wipes his eyes with the heels of his hands like an exhausted child.

COFFEY
Poor Del. Poor old Del.

PAUL
Yes. Poor old Del. John, are <u>you</u> okay?

COFFEY
I could feel it from here.

PAUL
What do you mean? You could <u>hear</u> it? Is that what you mean?

COFFEY
He's out of it now, though. He's the lucky one. No matter how it happened, Del's the lucky one.

Paul realizes he won't get a coherent answer.

PAUL
Where's Mr. Jingles?

COFFEY
(points vaguely)
Ran down there. Don't think he'll be back.
(beat)
Awful tired now, boss. Dog tired.

Coffey lays down, turns to face the wall.

PAUL
Me too, John. Me too.

CUT TO:

INT - PAUL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul enters in darkness, hangs his hat. He drifts into the kitchen, clicks on the radio. SOFT MUSIC BEGINS: Gene Austin singing "Did You Ever See A Dream Walking?"

He pours a drink at the kitchen table, takes a sip, lays the glass down. Jan sleepily appears from the darkness behind him, entering the kitchen. He realizes she's there, glances back.

She can sense the weight on his soul. She comes to him, folds his head into her arms. They stand that way, he drawing strength and she giving it, as the music plays on...

DISSOLVE TO:

SEQUENCE WITH MUSIC:

INT - CHURCH - MORNING

CAMERA TRACKS the pews to find Paul and Jan seated together in the congregation, voices raised in hymn...

EXT - COUNTRY ROAD - MORNING

Paul's Model T comes sputtering up the road. He and Jan are taking a drive, still in their Sunday best...

EXT - HAL'S HOUSE - MORNING

Paul and Jan wait at the front door. Jan holds a baking dish.

PAUL
I hate this.

JAN
I know.

The door opens. Hal, looking tired, ushers them inside...

EXT - BACKYARD - MORNING

...and they walk outside to find MELINDA MOORES sitting in the sun, frail and wasted, a blanket on her knees. She'd be beautiful if not for the cancer killing her.

Paul is shocked at her appearance, hides it as best he can. Jan covers for him -- she drops to Melinda's side with a warm smile and a kiss, takes the woman's frail hands in hers.

Paul catches Jan's eye. The look he gives her says it all -- I don't know what I'd do without you...

DISSOLVE:

...and we find Paul and Hal talking quietly over beers while the women visit b.g.:

HAL
She's having one of her good days. I thank God for that.

PAUL
What's a bad day?

HAL
(beat)
Sometimes she's...not herself anymore. She swears.

PAUL
Swears?

HAL
It just pops out, the most awful language you can imagine. She doesn't even know she's doing it. I didn't know she'd ever <u>heard</u> words like that...and to hear her say them in her sweet voice...
(gazes off)
I'm glad she's having a good day, Paul. I'm glad for you and Jan.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PAUL'S AND JAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul is wide awake, staring at the dark. Jan can sense him brooding. She rolls over sleepily.

JAN
Honey? If you don't say what's on your mind, I'm afraid I'll have to smother you with a pillow.

PAUL
I'm thinking I love you. I'm thinking I don't know what I'd do if you were gone.

JAN
Oh.

PAUL
(beat)
I'm also thinking I'd like to have the boys over tomorrow.

Off Jan's look, we

CUT TO:

INT - DINING ROOM - DAY

Brutal, Harry, and Dean are seated at the table with Paul and Jan. Serving plates are being passed, everybody digging in:

THE MEN
(various, ad-lib)
Ma'am, you sure know how to fry up some fine chicken...Brutal, don't hog the taters now...Try that corn yet? It's something special...

Paul softly interjects:

PAUL
You saw what he did with the mouse.

This stops everybody cold. Dean puts his chicken down, wipes his hands. Looks are traded in the silence.

BRUTAL
I could'a gone the rest of the day without you bringing that up.

DEAN
I could'a gone the rest of the year.

PAUL
He did it to me too. He put his hands on me and took my bladder infection away.

The men absorb this. Brutal glances to Jan.

JAN
When he came home, he was...all better.

DEAN
You're talking about an authentic healing. A praise-Jesus miracle.

PAUL
I am.

BRUTAL
If you say it, I accept it. But what's it got to do with us?

Jan looks to Paul, realization starting to dawn:

JAN
Melinda? Oh, Paul...

BRUTAL
Melinda? Melinda Moores?

Paul nods -- that's who we're talking about.

JAN
You really think you can help her?

PAUL
It's not a bladder infection, or even a busted up mouse. But there might be a chance.

HARRY
Hold on now. You're talking about our jobs. Sneak a sick woman onto a cellblock?

PAUL
Hal would never allow that. You know him, he wouldn't believe something unless it fell on him.

BRUTAL
So you're talking about taking John Coffey to her. That's more than just our jobs, Paul.

DEAN
Damn right. That's prison time if we get caught.

HARRY
Let's not discuss this like it's even an option. Brutal, help me out here...

Brutal lets out a long breath, considering. He looks to Paul.

BRUTAL
I'm sure she's a fine woman...

JAN
The finest.

PAUL
What's happening to her is an offense, Brutal. To the eyes and the ears and the heart.

BRUTAL
I have no doubt. But we don't know her like you and Jan do...do we?

PAUL
That's why it's a lot to ask.

HARRY
It is. Let's not forget Coffey's a murderer. What if he escapes? I'd hate losing my job or going to prison, but I'd hate having a dead child on my conscience even more.

PAUL
I don't think that'll happen...
(beat, softly)
...in fact, I don't think he did it at all.

The men are stunned by this. Off their looks:

PAUL
I just can't see God putting a gift like that in the hands of a man who would kill a child.

DEAN
Well, that's a tender notion, but the man's on death row for the crime. Plus he's huge. If he tried to get away, it'd take a lot of bullets to stop him.

BRUTAL
We'd all have shotguns in addition to sidearms. I'd insist on that.
(to Paul)
He tried anything, we'd have to take him down. You understand.

PAUL
I understand.

BRUTAL
(beat)
So. Tell us what you had in mind.

FADE TO BLACK

IN BLACKNESS, A TITLE CARD APPEARS:

"Night Journey"

CUT TO:

INT - INFIRMARY BUILDING/DISPENSARY - NIGHT

A FLASHLIGHT BEAM plays across a glass cabinet, scanning the contents. The beam pauses. A hand enters frame, unlocks the cabinet, pulls out a bottle of morphine tablets...

...and WE ANGLE TO Brutal as he shakes half a dozen pills onto his palm, pockets them, replaces the bottle on the shelf. He turns and slips five bucks to a NIGHTSHIFT ORDERLY.

BRUTAL
I was never here.

ORDERLY
Shit, for five bucks, you was never nowhere.

INT - E BLOCK ACCESS TUNNEL - NIGHT

A MORPHINE PILL is being crushed to powder on the stainless steel gurney. TILT UP to Paul crushing the pills. Brutal carefully scrapes the powder onto a small sheet of paper...

INT - PAUL'S INNER OFFICE - NIGHT

Percy is parked in Paul's chair with his feet up, reading a book titled: "CARING FOR MENTAL PATIENTS."

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT

Harry and Dean are playing cards at the duty desk, tension thick, cards slapping softly as the seconds tick by. Paul and Brutal finally show up toting bottles of RC Cola:

BRUTAL
Fellas thirsty? Fresh out of the icebox.

DEAN
Oh, thanks. That's swell.

HARRY
Yeah, hot in here.

They begin popping the caps off, swigging cola. The sound of it brings Billy to his bars.

BILLY
Hey. Hey, I'm'a get some too?

BRUTAL
My ass you get some too.

PAUL
You think you deserve any?

HARRY
(checks a clipboard)
Day report says he's been okay.

BILLY
Hell, yes, I been behaved. C'mon, now, don't be stingy hogs.

Paul shrugs to Brutal -- why not? Brutal pops the top off a bottle, passes it to Paul. Paul grabs a tin cup, sets it on the desk...and we see it contains the morphine powder. He pours the cola, swirls it around...

ANGLE THROUGH COFFEY'S BARS

...as Coffey looks up, sensing something happening. He peers up the Mile as Paul walks to:

BILLY'S CELL

Billy reaches for the cup, but Paul keeps it out of reach.

PAUL
You gonna stay behaved?

BILLY
C'mon, you clunk, gimme that.

PAUL
You promise me, or I'll drink it myself right here in front of you.

BILLY
C'mon now, don't be that way. I be good.

Paul lets him take the cup. Billy knocks it back, draining it in three huge swallows. He lets out an awesome belch.

PAUL
Cup.

BILLY
What if I decide to keep it?

PAUL
We'll break out the fire hose and take it anyway. And you will have drunk your last R.C. Cola. Unless they serve 'em down in hell.

Billy's smile fades. He hands the cup through the bars. Paul takes it, turns and heads back to --

THE DUTY DESK

-- where Brutal, Harry, and Dean have been watching the entire exchange with their hearts in their throats...

DISSOLVE:

...and we find Billy staring glassy-eyed at the ceiling. He keels over on his bunk. ANGLE TO to Paul and Brutal stepping to the bars with Harry and Dean.

PAUL
Anybody wants to back out, now's the time. After this, there's no turning back.
(off their looks)
So? We gonna do this?

A voice comes softly from down the way:

COFFEY
Sure. I'd like to take a ride.

Their heads come slowly around, staring at Coffey in shock.

BRUTAL
(to Paul)
Guess we're <u>all</u> in.

INT - PAUL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Percy looks up from his book as the door opens. Paul enters with Brutal and Harry, ominously hemming the desk.

PERCY
What is this?

Paul pulls the canvas straitjacket from behind his back.

PAUL
Payback.

Percy jumps up and tries for the execution chamber, but Harry grabs him, spins him back. A wild scuffle ensues as:

PERCY
Let go of me! Let go!

PAUL
Settle down, Percy!

Percy tries to jerk away, crashes into the desk. The book he was reading falls to the floor --

-- and a "Tijuana Bible" is revealed within the pages. It's a pornographic cartoon book of the type popular in the '30's, featuring crude drawings of famous cartoon characters or movie stars engaged in outlandish sexual acts. This one has Olive Oyl getting it doggy-style from Popeye. The word balloon over his head features his famous laugh: "Uk-uk-uk-uk!"

BRUTAL
Ooooh, Poicy! What would your mother say?

PERCY
Let go, you ignoramus! I know people! Big people!

PAUL
So you've said. C'mon, stick out your arms like a good boy.

PERCY
I won't. And you can't make me.

BRUTAL
You're dead wrong about that, you know.

Brutal grabs Percy by the ears, twisting hard. Percy lets out a shriek -- not just of pain, but a dismayed understanding that he's not going to bluster his way out of this one.

BRUTAL
You gonna put your arms up? I'll rip your ears off. Use 'em for tea caddies. You know I will.

PAUL
The man's ripping your ears off, Percy. I'd do as he says.

Percy jerks his arms up before him. They get the straitjacket on him within seconds, binding him tight. Percy turns to Paul on the verge of tears. Softly:

PERCY
Please, Paul. Don't put me in with Wild Bill. Please.

PAUL
You would think that.

Paul gives him a hard, angry shove...

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT

...and they bring him down the Mile to the restraint room door. Brutal takes Percy's holster and baton.

BRUTAL
You'll get 'em back, don't worry.

PERCY
That's more than I can say about your jobs! All your jobs! You can't do this to me! You can't!

Paul steps forward with a roll of strapping tape.

PAUL
Let you in on a little secret. We can and we are.

He slaps the tape over Percy's mouth and shoves him back into the restraint room. Percy stands breathing heavily through his nose, making muffled mmmmph-mmmmph! sounds under the tape.

PAUL
You're going to have a few hours of quiet time now, so you can reflect on what you did to Del.

BRUTAL
(grins)
If you get lonely, think about Olive Oyl...
(thrusting his hips)
...uk-uk-uk-uk!

And they slam the door, shutting Percy into darkness.

A WALL-MOUNTED GUN SAFE

is unlocked, shotguns pulled out. The men load up, heading down the Mile as:

PAUL
One more time -- what do you say if somebody comes by?

DEAN
Coffey got upset, so we put him in the restraint room. They hear any noise, they'll think it's him.

They come to Coffey's cell.

COFFEY
We goan for the ride now?

PAUL
That's right.

The cell is unlocked. Coffey emerges. Paul motions them along, still grilling Dean:

PAUL
What about us?

DEAN
You're over in Admin, going over Del's file. Brutal and Harry are in the laundry doing their wash--

A skinny white arm suddenly shoots out from Wild Bill's cell and grabs Coffey by the wrist. The men gasp, shocked to see Billy on his feet, grinning and weaving like a punch-drunk.

Coffey's reaction is beyond simple surprise; he's actually trembling at Billy's touch as if some electrical circuit were engaged. His eyes are wide and horrified, as if he'd just put his hand in a basket full of snakes. He tries to pull away, but Billy has him tight, that mysterious circuit blazing.

BILLY
(slurring wildly)
Where you fink you're goin'?

Coffey responds softly, with utmost horror:

COFFEY
You're a bad man.

BILLY
S'right, nigger. Bad as you'd want.

Paul plucks Billy's hand off Coffey's arm -- and Coffey flinches back as the circuit is broken.

BILLY
Whooeee. Whole room's spinning. Like I'm shit-ass drunk. I have me some shine or what?

He turns and staggers back to his bunk, muttering all the way:

BILLY
Niggers oughtta have they own 'lectric chair. White man oughtn't havta sit in no nigger 'lectric chair, nossir...

He goes face-first onto his bunk. Coffey is still staring.

COFFEY
He's a bad man.

INT - EXECUTION CHAMBER - NIGHT

Coffey is brought in...and freezes in horror at the sight of Old Sparky. A whisper:

COFFEY
They're still in there. Pieces of them, still in there. I hear them screaming.

All eyes go to electric chair. It sits shrouded in shadow like an ominous throne. Never before has this place felt so haunted to the men. It makes the hairs on the neck stand up.

PAUL
John, come along! Right now, y'hear? C'mon! Toward that door!

Coffey finally responds, pulling away...

INT - E BLOCK ACCESS TUNNEL - NIGHT

...and they come down the steps. They realize Coffey will have to stoop all the way down the tunnel. Paul pats the gurney.

PAUL
Lie down on this.
(off Coffey's look)
It'll be easier for you and no harder for us.

Coffey eases carefully onto the gurney, lying on his back. His knees hang over the edge and his toes touch the ground, but it works. They push him along, traversing the pools of light.

Coffey actually starts to smile. He reaches out his arms, fingertips touching the tunnel walls as they go by.

COFFEY
Say. This is fun.

EXT - PRISON WALL - NIGHT

A massive iron door SQUEALS open onto a little-used fenced enclosure. Paul and the others bring Coffey up from the tunnel below, emerging into the night. Coffey's breath catches as he gazes wondrously up at the stars, pointing:

COFFEY
Look, boss! It's Cassie, the lady in the rocking chair!

PAUL
Shhh. John, you have to be quiet now.

COFFEY
(whispering)
You see her? You see the lady?

BRUTAL
We see her, John.

Harry goes first, hugging the shadows as he pulls his keys to unlock the gate...

WIDE SHOT OF PRISON

...while TOWER GUARDS huddle in their enclosures atop the walls. An occasional SPOTLIGHT cuts the darkness. FIREFLIES dance in the fields and trees as far as the eye can see.

Four dark figures detach from the shadows, hurrying across the lonely country road into the fields on the far side...

EXT - WOODS - NIGHT

Coffey's hand scoops up some fallen leaves. TILT UP to his face as he crunches them under his nose, inhaling their smell.

He sees the guards throwing him anxious looks. He misreads this, holds out of hand so they can smell too. They do it, just to make him happy.

PAUL
C'mon, big boy, keep moving.

A FEW FIREFLIES come winking through frame as the group presses on...

ANOTHER AREA/WOODS

The trees are growing sparser, opening onto fields. MORE FIREFLIES are flitting into view, trailing in their wake...

BRUTAL
How far is it?

HARRY
Just up ahead...

Harry brings them to a thicket of trees. They start removing branches and boughs, uncovering a battered old FARMALL TRUCK hidden in the brush.

The men pause. Even more fireflies are swirling around them now, growing in number. It's getting downright weird.

Coffey laughs softly, drawing their attention. A childlike smile has utterly transformed his face. He raises his hand, letting a firefly weave playfully in and out of his fingers.

COFFEY
Hey there, little firefly. Where's Mrs. Firefly this evening?

Another firefly joins the first, both now dancing and blinking around his fingers. Coffey laughs again.

COFFEY
Oh, there you is. You come out to play too?

The men stand gaping. The fireflies are flitting to Coffey as if to a beacon. He waves his hands slowly, fireflies blinking and trailing from his fingertips like magic dust.

They begin orbiting his shiny bald head like tiny glowing planets orbiting a sun, their light kicking a mellow sheen off his ebony skin. Coffey's eyes meet Paul's.

PAUL
They seem...drawn to you.

COFFEY
I love 'em, is why. They don't think no hurtful thoughts. They's just happy to be. Happy little lightning bugs...

The men don't know whether to be enchanted or terrified. Harry gives Paul a look -- can we go? Please?

PAUL
C'mon, big boy. Upsy-daisy.

Coffey clambers up on the stakebed. Paul and Brutal join him. Harry gets in behind the wheel, jabs the starter button...

ON THE STAKEBED

...while Coffey sits with his back to the cab.

PAUL
John? Do you know where we're taking you?

COFFEY
Help a lady?

PAUL
That's right. Help a lady. But how do you know?

COFFEY
Dunno. Tell the truth, boss, I don't know much'a anything. Never have.

The truck pulls out. Coffey waves as the fireflies get left behind, dwindling away like stars.

COFFEY
Bye, fireflies. Bye.

WIDE ANGLE OF COUNTRYSIDE

The truck rumbles from the fields onto a dirt road, countless fireflies swirling in its wake...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT - MOORES HOUSE - NIGHT

Headlights come over the rise. The truck appears, rumbling down toward the house. The world is isolated and still.

IN THE TRUCK CAB

Harry stops and cuts the engine, leaving the headlights on. Silence now, save for the trilling of crickets.

IN THE STAKEBED

Paul and Brutal both look terrified now that they're actually here. An urgent whisper:

BRUTAL
We can still turn back.

Paul hesitates, wanting to do just that, but:

COFFEY
Boss, look. Someone's up.

Lights are coming on inside the house. Coffey rises and steps down from the truck, pulling Paul along. Brutal follows them.

BRUTAL
This is a mistake. Christ, Paul, what were we thinking?

PAUL
Too late now. Harry, keep John here until we call you.

Paul and Brutal walk to the front door as the lights inside the house keep clicking on. The last one finally comes on over the stoop, the front door opens a crack...and the twin barrels of a shotgun poke out into the night.

HAL
Who the hell goes there at two-thirty in the goddamn morning?

PAUL
Hal, it's us! It's Paul and Brutal -- it's us!

The door swings wider, revealing Hal's face gaunt and haggard in the yellow porch light, stunned to see them:

HAL
Paul? What are you doing here at this hour? Jesus, it's not a lockdown, is it? Or a riot?

PAUL
Hal, God's sakes, take your finger off the trigger...

Hal doesn't, aiming past them at the truck in the yard.

HAL
Are you hostages? Who's out there? Who's by that truck?

Coffey steps into the glare of headlights with Harry tugging on his arm, trying to hold him back. Hal cocks both hammers.

HAL
John Coffey! Halt! Halt right there or I shoot!

His aim wavers as a woman's voice comes from upstairs:

MELINDA (O.S.)
Hal? Who are you talking to, you fucking cocksucker?

A frozen moment. Hal mortified. Paul gives him a look -- is that Melinda? Hal's shotgun shifts back to Coffey -- but Paul steps in front of the muzzle.

PAUL
No one's hurt. We're here to help.

HAL
Help what? I don't understand. Is this a prison break?

PAUL
I can't explain what it is. You just have to trust me.

Coffey comes up the steps, brushes Paul aside, stops before the warden. Hal blinks, his thoughts suddenly fuzzy -- it's that benign hypnotic effect Coffey has.

HAL
What do you...want?

MELINDA (O.S.)
Hal! Make them go away! No salesmen in the middle of the night! No Fuller brushes! No French knickers with come in the crotch! Tell them to take a flying fuck in a rolling d...d...

We hear the sound of a GLASS BREAKING, then she begins to sob.

COFFEY
(a whisper)
Just to help. Just to help, boss, that's all.

HAL
You can't. No one can.

Coffey pulls the shotgun gently from Hal's grasp, hands it to Paul. Coffey moves past Hal into the house...

INT - HOUSE - NIGHT

...and comes up the hallway toward the stairs.

HAL
Don't you go up there! Don't you do it!

COFFEY
Boss, you just be quiet now and let me be.

Coffey mounts the stairs with the others at his heels, heading up toward that quavering voice:

MELINDA (O.S.)
Stay out of here! Whoever you are, just stay out! I'm not dressed for visitors, you rat's asshole!

INT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Coffey enters, trailed by the others. Paul pauses, horrified:

The woman propped up in bed barely resembles Melinda Moores anymore -- she looks made up like a Halloween witch, her livid skin hanging in a loose trail of wrinkles, one corner of her mouth twisted. Yellowish bile stains her chin and the front of her nightgown. Her hair has gone white and straw-like, her eyes glowering at Coffey with lively, irrational interest:

MELINDA
Oh, so big! Pull down your pants! Let's have a look!

Hal groans with despair. Coffey just stands for a moment, watching her from a distance, then approaches the bed...

MELINDA
Don't come near me, pigfucker.

...but as he draws closer, a change occurs. Her features soften, her eyes become more sane and aware.

MELINDA
Why do you have so many scars? Who hurt you so badly?

COFFEY
Don't hardly remember, ma'am.

Coffey sits on the edge of the bed. The lights seem to flare hotter and brighter. Tears are forming in Melinda's eyes.

MELINDA
What's your name?

COFFEY
John Coffey, ma'am. Like the drink, only not spelt the same.

She lays back, staring at him with shining fascination. The world seems to be slowing down, growing very still indeed...

...and he starts bending slowly toward her.

COFFEY
Ma'am?

MELINDA
Yes, John Coffey?

COFFEY
I see it. I see it.

He comes closer...closer still...

COFFEY
You be still now. You be so quiet and so still.

He brushes her forehead with his lips...the gentlest whisper of a kiss...then moves his mouth down to hers. For a moment we can see one of her eyes staring past him, filling with an expression of surprise...

...and then her face is lost to view as Coffey puts his lips on hers. We hear a soft whistling sound as he begins inhaling the air deeply from her lungs. Something hot and glowing starts passing between them, drawn on his breath...

The men watch. The house seems to shudder in that moment, as if the entire world has shifted an inch to the right...

DOWNSTAIRS PARLOR

...and the grandfather clock stops ticking, the pendulum stopping dead, the glass face cracking neatly up the center...

BEDROOM

...and a windowpane cracks. Then another. A picture falls off the wall. A lightbulb bursts, showering glass.

Paul smells smoke, realizes the fringed coverlet of the bed has caught fire. Moving like a man in a dream, he reaches for the waterglass on the nightstand, douses the flames.

Coffey keeps kissing Melinda in that deep and mysterious way, inhaling and inhaling, her hand held in his like a tiny white bird. For a moment we actually hear something screaming, as if some willful imp were being extracted by force...

...and then it's over. Coffey raises his head, revealing:

Melinda's beautiful face. Her mouth no longer droops. Color is coming back to her hair. He skin is shining with life.

Coffey regards her raptly for a moment or two, then starts coughing violently. He turns away and drops to his knees, hacking like a man in the last stages of tuberculosis.

Paul and his men are expecting Coffey to spit out the "bugs," but he doesn't -- he just keeps coughing, deep and hard, barely finding time to snatch in the next breath of air.

Hal goes to his wife, beyond stunned, sits at her side. She looks back at him with amazement, her face like a dirty mirror that's been suddenly wiped clean.

John's coughing grows even worse. Brutal drops to his side and slaps his broad, spasming back.

BRUTAL
John! Sick it up! Cough 'em out like you done before!

Coffey just keeps retching, eyes watering from the strain, spit flying from his mouth.

BRUTAL
He's choking! Whatever he sucked out of her, he's choking on it!

Paul starts toward them. Coffey crawls away, pressing himself into a corner with his face against the wallpaper. He's still making gruesome deep hacking sounds, but getting it under control. He weakly waves Paul off -- let me be.

Paul looks to the bed. Hal sits with Melinda, stroking her brow. Color is blooming in her cheeks even as we watch.

MELINDA
How did I get here? We were going to the hospital in Indianola, weren't we? We stopped and you bought me a packet of posies...

HAL
Shhh. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter anymore.

MELINDA
Did I have the X-ray? Did I?

PAUL
Yes.

They both look at him.

PAUL
It was clear. There was no tumor.

Hal bursts into tears. Melinda sits up, comforting him. Her eyes are drawn to the corner.

MELINDA
Who is that man?

Coffey is struggling to rise. Brutal does his best to help.

PAUL
John? Can you turn around? Can you turn around and see this lady?

Coffey turns. His face is ashen gray, seriously ill.

MELINDA
What's your name?

COFFEY
John Coffey, ma'am.

MELINDA
Like the drink, only not spelled the same.

COFFEY
No, ma'am. Not spelt the same at all.

She pushes the covers aside to rise. Hal tries to stop her...

HAL
Melly, no...

...but she pushes his hand gently aside. Hal watches in wonder as she stands, takes a first tentative step...and walks to Coffey. She gazes up and touches his face.

MELINDA
I dreamed of you. I dreamed you were wandering in the dark, and so was I. We found each other. We found each other in the dark.

She undoes her necklace, holds it up for him. He hesitates, glances to Paul. Paul nods -- it's all right. Coffey lowers his head. Melinda affixes the delicate chain around his neck.

MELINDA
It's St. Christopher. I want you to have it, Mr. Coffey, and wear it. He'll keep you safe. Please wear it for me.

COFFEY
Thank you, ma'am.

MELINDA
Thank you, John.

Her arms go around his neck, hugging him tightly as if she might never let go.

EXT - MOORES HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul and the men hustle Coffey out the front door toward the truck, helping him as best they can. He's weak as a baby, knees threatening to give out at any moment.

PAUL
C'mon, John, stay on your feet.

HARRY
Christ, he goes down, we'll need three mules and a crane to pick him up again...

They get Coffey to the truck and throw their backs into it, helping him crawl up onto the stakebed. He rolls over on his back. Harry hops up, covers him with an old blanket. Brutal pulls Paul aside, speaking low:

BRUTAL
He'll never sit in Old Sparky. You know that, don't you?
(off Paul's look)
He swallowed that stuff for a reason. I give him a few days. One of us'll be doing a cell check and there he'll be. Dead on his bunk.

PAUL
If that's his choice, he's earned it.
(beat)
Let's get him back on the Mile.

FADE TO BLACK

IN BLACKNESS, A TITLE CARD APPEARS:

"Coffey on the Mile"

CUT TO:

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT

Dean starts babbling with relief as they return:

DEAN
Am I glad to see you! You were gone so long! Wild Bill's making noises like he's gonna wake up...
(notices Coffey)
What the hell's wrong with him?

BRUTAL
He's hurting, Dean. Hurting bad.

Dean jumps in, helps them steer Coffey into his cell.

PAUL
John, we're gonna set you on your bunk now. Ready?

Coffey nods, sits heavily on the bunk. He lowers his head, breath rasping like a rusted hinge. The guards step out.

DEAN
What about Mrs. Moores? Was it like the mouse? Was it a...you know...a miracle?

PAUL
Yes. Yes it was.

Paul scans their faces. Smiles are traded. An exultant beat.

HARRY
Damn. I think we got away with it.

BRUTAL
We still gotta convince a certain somebody to keep his trap shut.

PAUL
Get his stuff.

Dean hurries off to retrieve Percy's holster and baton. Brutal unlocks the restraint room door, swings it open. Percy is revealed sitting against the wall, glaring, his mouth still taped. Paul crouches down. Brutal joins him.

PAUL
I want to talk, not shout. I take the tape off, you gonna be calm?

Percy nods. Paul takes hold of the tape, preparing to yank.

BRUTAL
My mother always said if you do it fast, it won't hurt so much.

Paul rips the tape off. Percy's eyes water with pain.

BRUTAL
I guess she was wrong.

PERCY
Get me out of this nut-coat.

PAUL
In a minute.

PERCY
Now! Now! Right n--

Paul slaps him hard, knocks him sideways. Percy looks up, blinking in surprise. Paul grabs him, yanks him back up.

PAUL
You shut up and listen. You deserved to be punished for what you did to Del. You'll accept it like a man, or we'll make you sorry you were ever born. We'll tell people how you sabotaged Del's execution --

PERCY
Sabotaged!

PAUL
-- and how you pissed yourself like a frightened little girl. Yes, we'll talk, that's a given -- but, Percy, mind me now...we'll also see you beaten within an inch of your life.

Percy blinks, unable to grasp that.

PAUL
We know people, too, are you so foolish you don't realize that? People with friends and loved ones doing time in this prison. People who'd be happy to amputate your nose or your penis just so someone they care about could get an extra three hours in the exercise yard every week.
(off Percy's look)
Let bygones be bygones. Nothing's hurt so far but your pride...and nobody need ever know about that except the people in this room.

BRUTAL
What happens on the Mile, stays on the Mile. Always has.

A long pause. Softly:

PERCY
May I be let out of this coat now?

They pull him to his feet, undo the straps. He shrugs out of the straitjacket and adjusts his clothes, trying to maintain a shred of dignity.

PERCY
My things?

Dean hands them over. Percy smoothes his hair and puts his hat on, starts strapping on his holster belt.

PAUL
Think it over, Percy.

PERCY
Oh, I intend to. I intend to think about it very hard. Starting right now.

Percy exits the restraint room. Brutal whispers to Paul:

BRUTAL
He'll talk. Sooner or later.

Paul nods with weary resignation -- yeah, I know.

ON THE MILE

Percy pauses near Coffey's cell, careless as always, getting his holster buckled -- and a massive black arm grabs him through the bars. His SCREAM brings Paul and the others running from the restraint room.

Coffey's face is pressed so tight between his bars it looks like he's trying to push his head through. He draws his lips back, baring his teeth in an awful sneer...

Percy whacks him with his baton. Coffey barely seems to feel it. He curls his free hand around the back of Percy's head, pulling him ever closer...

...and Percy's screams are muffled as their mouths come together. Coffey begins exhaling as if he'd held his breath for hours. Percy jerks like a fish on a hook, but can't get away. The men jump in, trying to pry Percy loose, hollering for Coffey to let him go.

The black "insects" are flowing from Coffey to Percy, swirling into his mouth, up his nose, down his throat.

Several lightbulbs explode in their steel cages up and down the Mile. Percy's baton drops from his nerveless fingers and clatters to the floor, never to be picked up again.

And then Coffey steps back, rubbing his mouth as if he's tasted something bad. The color has returned to his skin.

Percy, however, is ashen gray. His expression is blank as a sheet of paper, not a trace of awareness in his eyes.

The men are stunned. Paul raises his hand to Percy's face, snaps his fingers. Nothing. He tries again, clapping loudly. Percy reacts slightly, eyes fluttering, swaying a bit.

PAUL
Easy, easy. You all right?

Percy says nothing. He turns and walks slowly up the Mile, his movements vacant and disjointed. He comes to a swaying stop at Wild Bill's cell...and turns slowly to look in.

Wild Bill is coming painfully around, groggily clutching his head. He looks up, sees Percy.

BILLY
What'a you looking at, you limp noodle? You wanna kiss my ass or suck my dick?

Nothing for the longest moment. Percy just staring...

...and then he pulls his gun and empties it into Wild Bill as fast as he can pull the trigger: BAM!BAM!BAM!BAM!BAM!BAM! Bill takes all six rounds in the chest, reeling back across the cell. He hits the wall and slides down, leaving a smear, his face registering a final look of stunned surprise.

Paul and the others tackle Percy and bring him down, wrestling the gun out of his hand. Dean is almost weeping:

DEAN
Oh God, oh God, no...

Percy is flat on his back, staring up at nothing. The black "bugs" come drifting out of nose and mouth, swirling in the air over his head. They turn white and disappear.

The men are speechless. Paul turns, sees Coffey sitting on the floor at his bars, watching.

COFFEY
Punished them bad men.

PAUL
Why Wild Bill? Why?

COFFEY
I saw in his heart. When he grab my arm, I saw what Wild Billy done. Saw plain as day. Can't hide what's in your heart.

PAUL
What? Saw what?

Coffey reaches toward him, straining through the bars.

COFFEY
Take my hand, boss. You see for yourself.

BRUTAL
Paul, no!

Paul hesitates, torn between reason and Coffey's pleading eyes. A whisper:

COFFEY
My hand.

Paul can't help it. He has to. Their hands come together. Paul lurches wildly as that circuit starts blazing between them...

PAUL
No...please...

COFFEY
Gots to, boss. Gots to give you a little bit of myself. A gift, like. A gift of what's in me so you can see...

...and Paul sees:

The Detterick twins. Kathe and Cora. Laughing and playing hopscotch in the dust under a late afternoon sun...

A dinner table. Family having supper late in the day, basket of biscuits being passed. 12 year-old Howie Detterick taking it, passing it on...

A hand with a paint brush slopping bright red paint on the side of a barn...

Kathe skipping to the head of the hopscotch squares, turning and starting back, laughing in the sun...

The paint brush slopping more paint, dripping like blood...

Paul jerks and twists, trying to pull away, trying to break the circuit, but he can't, not till all is seen and done:

Marjorie Detterick calling from the porch for everybody to come eat, supper's ready...

A hammer pausing. Klaus looking down from atop the barn...

The Detterick twins finishing their hopscotch, gathering their jump-ropes from the dust, running across the yard...

The basket of biscuits being passed to little Cora, who takes a biscuit and passes it on...

Klaus coming down the ladder, calling to his daughters. The little girls running past the man with the paintbrush, who turns and smiles as they go by...it's Wild Bill.

The basket of biscuits is passed one last time. A hand pulls one out, raises it for a bite. It's Wild Bill, smiling at the little girls as conversation flows around the table...

Paul screams, trying to pull away, but:

The porch door is kicked off its hinges just before dawn, a figure looming in the doorway. Kathe wakes, her scream cut short as a man's fist punches her hard in the face...

Paul trembles violently as if riding the lightning himself, pleading for it stop, but there's one last thing:

Wild Bill looms over the terrified little girls like a horrendous boogeyman, whispers to Kathe:

BILLY
You love your sister? You make any noise, you know what happens? I'll kill her instead of you.
(to Cora)
And if you make any noise, I'll kill her.

And he drags them out into the coming dawn...

...as Coffey lets Paul go. Paul is gasping, back in the real world where his men are staring at him with wide eyes.

COFFEY
He kill 'em with they love. They love for each other. You see how it is?

Paul nods, numb. Tears are flowing down Coffey's face. Softly:

COFFEY
That's how it is ever' day. That's how it is all over the worl'...

CUT TO:

WILD BILL

lies dead, staring with glassy eyes. A FLASHBULB POPS, rimming him with harsh blue light...

INT - E BLOCK - DAWN

...as Hal arrives, wearing his pajama top under his overcoat. He sees the POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER taking pictures. The guards are giving statements to GROUPS OF COPS, everybody murmuring:

DEAN
...well, I dunno, he just snapped, I guess...

HARRY
...s'right, one minute he's fine, the next -- blammo...

BRUTAL
...bastard grabbed him through the bars a few days back, scared the boy so bad he wet himself...

Hal turns, sees:

PERCY

sits handcuffed on the floor of the Mile, eyes glassier than Wild Bill's. TWO COPS are trying to snap him out of it:

COP #1
Son! Son! Can you hear me?

COP #2
Speak up if you can hear us! We gotta ask you some questions!

A MEDIC is raising Percy's eyelid with his thumb, shining a penlight, getting no reaction.

MEDIC
I think this boy's cheese slid off his cracker.

HAL

sees Paul, motions him aside to talk privately:

HAL
I'll cover you as much as I can, even if it means my job, but I have to know. Does this have anything do with what happened at my house? Does it, Paul?

Paul looks Hal in the eye. As with Bitterbuck, the lie comes easy:

PAUL
No.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

TRACKING A PAIR OF FEET shuffling into the room in hospital slippers, escorted by TWO ORDERLIES. The patient is brought to a window. The orderlies turn and leave...

...and we BOOM UP to reveal Percy, catatonic, staring out the same window where we met Wild Bill...

EXT - HOSPITAL - DAY

...and we WIDEN SLOWLY from Percy at the window to reveal his last stop in life. It's emblazoned on the gate: BRIAR RIDGE MENTAL HOSPITAL. He finally got that transfer.

CUT TO:

EXT - EDGECOMB HOUSE - DUSK

TIGHT ON PAUL, as softly:

PAUL
It makes sense. I read the file. Hal even said it himself. Wharton rambled all over the state last few years, causing trouble. Hell, longer than that. Been at it since he was ten. Vandalism. Petty theft. Setting fires.

ANGLE SHIFTS to include Jan, Brutal, Harry, and Dean. They're in the brambly pumpkin patch that borders the woods behind the house. The sun is setting, turning the horizon fiery.

JAN
You saw him. You actually saw this Wild Bill person take those girls.

PAUL
Their father hired him on for a few days last spring, help repair the barn. Cheap labor, just another drifter...

BRUTAL
Only not.

PAUL
Sick bastard came back a month later, just before dawn. Took the girls...did what he did. Coffey found them afterwards and tried to help. It was too late.

JAN
(absorbs this)
Then you can stop it. The execution, I mean. Get Coffey a new trial.

PAUL
Based on what, honey? Some kind of magical vision I had?

JAN
Show this farmer -- what's his name, Detterick? -- show him a picture of Wild Bill.
(off their looks)
Why not? If Wharton was there...if the farmer can identify his picture and they know he was there...

BRUTAL
Him being there in May doesn't mean he came back and killed those girls in June. Even if he was committing other crimes.

PAUL
They got their killer as far as they're concerned. Hell, Coffey's own lawyer would come throw the switch if we let him.

JAN
Then lie.

PAUL
Lie? About what?

JAN
Tell them Wharton confessed to the crime. Brutus, you can back him up, say you heard it too. You can say that's what set Percy off. He shot Wharton because he couldn't stand thinking of what happened to those two little girls, it snapped his mind...
(seeing their looks)
...what? What <u>now?</u>

DEAN
We never reported anything like that. We would've, too, everybody knows it. It's part of our job.

BRUTAL
Besides, confessing don't make it so. Slugs like Wild Bill lie about everything. Crimes they committed, women they had, even the weather.

JAN
But he was there! He painted their barn! He ate dinner with them!

PAUL
All the more reason he might take credit for the crime. He's gonna fry anyway, so why not boast?

Jan stands thinking for a moment, then:

JAN
All right. Then you've got to get John Coffey out on your own.

HARRY
Ma'am?

JAN
You did it once, didn't you? Only this time, don't bring him back.

Dean blinks, stunned by this notion. Gently:

DEAN
Ma'am, your son's grown up and moved away. My kids are just starting kindergarten. Will you be the one to explain to them why their daddy's in prison?

JAN
Work out a plan. Make it look like a real escape.

HARRY
Better be a plan an imbecile could dream up. Nobody'd believe it otherwise.

BRUTAL
Even if we did think of something, it wouldn't do any good.

JAN
Why not? Just why the hell not?

PAUL
Because he's a six-foot-eight-inch baldheaded black man with barely enough brains to feed himself. How long you think it'd be before he was recaptured? Two hours? Six?

Jan swipes a tear away with the heel of her hand. Softly:

JAN
Do you mean to kill him, you cowards? Do you?

Paul tries to take her hand. She wrenches away, furious.

JAN
Don't touch me! Next week this time you'll be a murderer, no better than that man Wharton, so don't touch me!

She runs off toward the house, starting to sob as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Paul is at the kitchen table in the wee hours, at his regular place, sipping beer. Irving Berlin's "Remember" PLAYS SOFTLY on the radio. Jan comes down, looking miserable and exhausted.

JAN
I'm so sorry I called you a coward. I feel worse about that than anything I've ever said to you in our whole marriage.

PAUL
Even that time we went camping and you called me Old Stinky Sam?

She can't help smiling at that. He returns the smile, offers her a sip of beer. She takes it, sits.

JAN
Does Hal know? That Coffey's innocent, I mean?
(Paul shakes his head)
Can he help? Does he have the influence to do something about this?

PAUL
No.

JAN
Then don't tell him. If he can't help, don't tell him. Ever.

PAUL
I won't.

JAN
(beat)
There's no way out of this for you, is there?

PAUL
No. I've been thinking about it, too, believe me.
(beat)
Tell you the truth, honey. I've done some things in my life I'm not proud of, but this is the first time I've ever felt in real danger of hell.

JAN
Hell? Oh, Paul...
(touches his face)
Talk to him. Talk to John. Find out what he wants.

CUT TO:

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT

Coffey sits quietly in his cell, a solitary firefly flitting in circles around his finger. Paul and the men appear. The firefly flits away, vanishing through Coffey's tiny window.

COFFEY
Hello, boss.

PAUL
Hello, John.

Brutal unlocks the cell. Paul enters.

PAUL
I guess you know we're coming down to it now. Another couple of days.
(beat)
Is there anything special you'd like for dinner that night? We can rustle you up most anything.

Coffey gives it some careful thought.

COFFEY
Meatloaf be nice. Mashed taters with gravy. Okra, maybe. I's not picky.

PAUL
What about a preacher? Someone you could say a little prayer with?

COFFEY
Don't want no preacher. <u>You</u> can say a prayer, if you want. I could get kneebound with you, I guess.

PAUL
Me?

Coffey gives him a look -- please.

PAUL
S'pose I could, if it came to that.

Paul sits, working himself up to it:

PAUL
John, I have to ask you something very important now.

COFFEY
I know what you gonna say. You don' have to say it.

PAUL
I do. I do have to.
(beat)
John, tell me what you want me to do. You want me to take you out of here? Just let you run away? See how far you can get?

COFFEY
Why would you do such a foolish thing?

Paul hesitates, emotions swirling, trying to find the right words.

PAUL
On the day of my judgment, when I stand before God, and He asks me why did I kill one of his true miracles, what am I gonna say? That it was my job? My <u>job?</u>

COFFEY
You tell God the Father it was a kindness you done.
(takes his hand)
I know you hurtin' and worryin', I can feel it on you, but you oughtta quit on it now. Because I <u>want</u> it over and done. I do.

Coffey hesitates -- now <u>he's</u> the one trying to find the right words, trying to make Paul understand:

COFFEY
I'm tired, boss. Tired of bein' on the road, lonely as a sparrow in the rain. Tired of not ever having me a buddy to be with, or tell me where we's coming from or going to, or why. Mostly I'm tired of people being ugly to each other. I'm tired of all the pain I feel and hear in the world ever' day. There's too much of it. It's like pieces of glass in my head all the time. Can you understand?

By now, Paul is blinking back tears. Softly:

PAUL
Yes, John. I think I can.

BRUTAL
There must be something we can do for you, John. There must be something you want.

Coffey thinks about this long and hard, finally looks up.

COFFEY
I ain't never seen me a flicker show.

CUT TO:

TIGHT ON COFFEY'S FACE

gazing with wide-eyed, open-mouthed wonder, the light of a motion picture projector flickering on his skin...

INT - PRISON AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

...while Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers dance up there on the big screen, images flowing in magical black and silver tones.

ASTAIRE
(singing)
Heaven, I'm in heaven...and my heart beats so that I can hardly speak...

Paul and the men are scattered about in the otherwise empty auditorium, also watching.

PROJECTION BOOTH

Toot operates the projector, peering through the tiny window into the theater. He yawns, glances at his watch. Late.

IN THE AUDITORIUM

Fred and Ginger are now in the most passionate and graceful part of the dance. Irving Berlin's music swells.

COFFEY

can't believe what he's seeing. He's so excited his breath is caught in his throat. Softly:

COFFEY
Why, they's angels. Angels. Just like up in heaven...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT

FOUR PAIRS OF FEET come marching up the Green Mile.

ANGLE ON COFFEY

Paul appears at the bars with Brutal, Harry, and Dean. Nothing is said. Coffey knows why they're here. He rises as Brutal unlocks the cell, slides the door open. Coffey steps out, looks around at their dazed and sad faces.

COFFEY
I be all right, fellas. This here's the hard part. I be all right in a little while.

Paul indicates the St. Christopher medal around John's neck:

PAUL
John, I should have that just for now. I'll give it back after.

John lets him take the necklace. Paul pockets it. They start to walk the Mile as:

COFFEY
You know, I fell asleep this afternoon and had me a dream. I dreamed about Del's mouse.

PAUL
Did you, John?

COFFEY
I dreamed he got down to that place Boss Howell talked about, that Mouseville place. I dreamed there was kids, and how they laughed at his tricks! My!

He laughs at the memory of it, then grows more serious:

COFFEY
I dreamed those two little blonde-headed girls were there. They 'us laughing, too. I put my arms around 'em and sat 'em on my knees, and there 'us no blood comin' outta their hair and they 'us fine. We all watch Mr. Jingles roll that spool, and how we did laugh. Fit to bus', we was.

Behind them, Dean stifles a sob.

PAUL'S INNER OFFICE

Coffey kneels. Paul joins him, self-conscious and uncertain.

PAUL
What should we pray for, John?

COFFEY
Strength?

Paul nods -- strength it is. Dean surprises Brutal and Harry by also kneeling. Brutal and Harry hesitate...then join them.

PAUL
God, please help us finish what we've started, and please welcome this man, John Coffey -- like the drink, but not spelled the same -- into heaven and give him peace. Please help us to see him off the best we can and let nothing go wrong. Amen.

Paul starts to rise, but Coffey takes his hand.

COFFEY
I know a prayer I once heard. Can I say it?

PAUL
You go right ahead, John. Take all the time you need.

Coffey closes his eyes, frowning in deep concentration.

COFFEY
Baby Jesus, meek and mild, pray for me...

And Paul sees:

Kathe and Cora Detterick kneeling together in the enclosed porch that night, just before their bedtime:

KATHE AND CORA
...and every child. Be my strength, be my friend...

And then the vision is gone as:

COFFEY
...be with me until the end. Amen.

Coffey rises, offers Paul his hand, helps him up.

EXECUTION CHAMBER

Full house tonight. Bill Dodge is waiting at Old Sparky.

Silence as Coffey is led in, all eyes on him. Klaus and Marjorie Detterick are in the front row. She mutters:

MARJORIE
Die slow, you bastard.

COFFEY

is faltering as Paul and Brutal bring him to the chair.

COFFEY
They's a lot of folks here hate me. A lot. I can feel it. Like bees stinging me. It hurts.

BRUTAL
Feel how we feel, then. We don't hate you -- can you feel that?

Coffey tries to take comfort in it, but flinches as:

MARJORIE
Kill him twice, you boys! You go on and kill that raping baby-killer twice, that'd be fine!

She dissolves into tears. Klaus pulls her against his shoulder, looking dazed by the whole thing.

Paul and Brutal turn John around, sit him down. Paul notices Dean crying again, his back to the witnesses. They kneel to apply the leg clamps, while Brutal and Harry secure the arms.

PAUL
Wipe your face before you stand up, Dean.

Dean nods, wiping his face with the sleeve of his coat. They rise, stepping back. This time, Paul's out front:

PAUL
Roll on one.

Van Hay cranks the generator. The lights flare hotter and brighter. It's just like in Melinda's bedroom the night Coffey cured her with a kiss. Airless and bright, dreamlike.

MARJORIE
Does it hurt, yet? I hope it does! I hope it hurts like hell!

PAUL
John Coffey...you have been condemned to die in the electric chair by a jury of your peers... sentence imposed by a judge in good standing in this state. Do you have anything to say before sentence is carried out?

John hesitates, nods.

COFFEY
I'm sorry for what I am.

MARJORIE
You ought to be! Oh, you monster, you damn well ought to be!

Brutal takes the mask from the hook to draw it over Coffey's head. Coffey looks to Paul with terrified, pleading eyes.

COFFEY
Please, boss, don't put that thing over my face. Don't put me in the dark, I's afraid of the dark.

PAUL
All right, John.

Brutal puts the mask back, proceeds with the sponge.

IN TICHT ANGLES:

The cap is lowered, the straps drawn. Coffey is breathing fast, terrified, muttering under his breath:

COFFEY
...heaven...I'm in heaven...
heaven...heaven...heaven...

THE WITNESSES

sit and wait, barely breathing.

JACK VAN HAY

is poised at the switch, wondering why the order won't come.

PAUL

is staring at Coffey, unable to say the words.

BRUTAL
(whispers)
Paul. You have to say it. You have to give the order.

Paul can't. He reaches out and touches Coffey's hand. Their fingers clasp. In that moment, staring into his eyes, Paul hears the last thought that ever goes through Coffey's head:

COFFEY'S VOICE
(whispered V.O.)
He kill 'em with they love. That's how it is ever' day. All over the worl'...

Their fingers disengage. Paul steps back, eyes still locked with Coffey's, and says the hardest words he's ever spoken:

PAUL
Roll on two.

Van Hay throws the switch. Coffey surges forward, fingers splayed and jittering past Old Sparky's arms.

Lights begin blowing out all over the Mile, raining shattered glass and sparks. Some of the witnesses scream.

A thin line of blood comes trickling out of Klaus Detterick's nose. He reaches up, absently wipes it away.

Coffey's eyes are locked on Paul's, riding the lightning all the way. He finally slumps. Van Hay kills the current.

Coffey's expression is peaceful, as if sleeping. A final pair of tears drift gently down his cheeks.

CUT TO:

INT - ACCESS TUNNEL - NIGHT

Paul ever so carefully replaces the St. Christopher's medal around Coffey's neck. They wheel him down the tunnel.

CUT TO:

INT - PAUL'S MODEL T - NIGHT

Paul drives home, his heart numb.

EXT - EDGECOMB HOUSE - NIGHT

Paul pulls in, cuts the engine. He sits for a moment, then gets out and heads for the house.

The door opens. Jan steps out in her nightgown and robe to meet him on the stairs. She takes him in her arms.

Paul can't hold it back anymore. He breaks down sobbing against her as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - NURSING HOME SUNROOM - PRESENT DAY

It's late in the day as:

PAUL
That was the last execution I ever took part in. Just couldn't do it anymore after that. Brutal either. We both transferred out, took jobs with Boys' Correctional.
(beat, nods)
That was all right. Catch 'em young, that became my motto. Might even have done some good.

ANGLE SHIFTS TO Elaine listening. Uncertain.

PAUL
You don't believe me.

ELAINE
I don't imagine you would lie to me, Paul. It's just that...

PAUL
...it's quite a story.

ELAINE
Yes. Quite a story.
(pause)
One thing I don't understand. You said you and Jan had a grown son in 1935. Is that right?
(Paul nods)
But if that's true...

PAUL
The math doesn't work, does it?

She shakes her head. Paul thinks for a moment, comes to a decision.

PAUL
You feel up to a walk?

CUT TO:

EXT - GEORGIA PINES - DAY

The rain has mostly stopped. Brad Dolan, back in street clothes, gets in his pickup truck and drives away...

INT - NURSING HOME - DAY

...while Paul and Elaine watch from a window.

EXT - GEORGIA PINES - DAY

This time, we see <u>two</u> red specks trudging slowly up the ridge toward the treeline.

CUT TO:

EXT - WOODS - DAY

Paul brings Elaine along the wooded path into view of the storage shacks. They're both wearing ponchos.

PAUL
There. It's in there.

ELAINE
Paul? This thing you want to show me. Is it scary?

PAUL
Scary? No. Not really.

He gives her a smile, offers his hand. She takes it.

INT - SHACK - DAY

We see Paul approach through the grimy window as before, this time bringing Elaine. ANGLE SHIFTS to the door as they arrive, creaking open on rusty hinges to reveal them.

They enter. Elaine looks around at the musty nooks and crannies, wondering what they're doing here. Paul touches her arm, directs her attention:

PAUL
There.

Elaine moves closer, sees it on the dusty floorboards:

An old cigar box.

For a moment, she doesn't know what to make of it.

PAUL
Hey. Wake up, old boy. Wake up.

Elaine's breath catches in her throat...

...as a pair of bright oilspot eyes peer over the edge of the cigar box. It's a mouse. His fur, once brown, is now all gray.

ELAINE
Paul? It isn't...it can't be...

Paul gets down on the floor, holds out his hand.

PAUL
Come over here, boy. Come on over here and see this lady.

The mouse tries several times to get over the side of the cigar box before he finally makes it. He comes to them, hobbling and crippled with arthritis. Paul pulls a slice of toast from his pocket, breaks off a small piece for the mouse.

ELAINE
That can't be Mr. Jingles.

Paul says nothing, just pulls a spool from his pocket. Mr. Jingles might be old, but he's as obsessed as ever. He gets ready to fetch, eyes riveted to the spool. Softly:

PAUL
Messieurs et mesdames. Bienvenue au cirque du mousie.

Paul tosses the spool. The mouse limps painfully after it. He reaches it, goes around...and has to lay down to catch his breath. Elaine starts forward, but Paul holds her back.

After a moment, Mr. Jingles finds his feet again. He rises and starts nosing the spool back to Paul.

ELAINE
Oh, Paul. Don't make him do it again. I can't bear to watch.

PAUL
(softly)
But he loves it so much.

He glances around at the shack with a sad smile.

PAUL
This isn't exactly the Mouseville we had in mind...but we make do, don't we, old fella?

BRAD (O.S.)
As I live and breathe!

They gasp and spin. Brad Dolan stands in the doorway.

BRAD
Fooled you, didn't I? Got yourself a little love nest here, I see...

He pauses, seeing Mr. Jingles.

BRAD
...what the fuck? Is that a <u>mouse?</u>

PAUL
Don't hurt him, okay? Okay?

BRAD
It's a goddamn mouse, y'old fool, they carry all kind'a disease...

Brad grabs an old garden hoe -- the blade's rusted, but still sharp enough to cut a mouse in two.

BRAD
...now step aside.

Paul rushes in front of Brad, fists clenched, yelling:

PAUL
You leave him alone, Percy! You leave him alone, or by God I'll--

Brad gives Paul a hard shove, pins him against the wall.

BRAD
Who you calling Percy? Name's Brad, you senile fucker. And I'm gonna nail that mouse, you can take that to the everfucking bank.

Elaine is suddenly at Brad's elbow, seething with fury:

ELAINE
How dare you? Get out!

BRAD
Piss off, you wrinkledy old bitch. Me and Paulie are talking.

ELAINE
His name is Mr. Edgecomb. If you ever call him Paulie again, your days of employment at Georgia Pines will end.

BRAD
Who the hell you think you are?

ELAINE
I am the grandmother of the man who is currently Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives. A man who loves his relatives, Mr. Dolan. All it would take is a phone call.

Brad's smile falters. Elaine steps closer.

ELAINE
At first I thought I'd let you be. I'm old, and that seemed easiest. But when my friends are threatened and abused, I do not let be.
(icy beat)
Now get out, or you won't work another day here. Not another hour. I swear it.

Brad eases his grip on Paul...and backs off.

BRAD
Don't know what you're getting so het up about. Just a damn mouse.

ELAINE
Get out, you ignorant man. What little mind you have is ugly and misdirected.

Brad flushes red, heads for the door. He pauses.

BRAD
Don't bother coming back here tomorrow...Mr. Edgecomb. Gonna be a new lock on this door. This is off-limits to residents, no matter what Mrs. My Shit Don't Stink has to say about it.

And off he goes. Paul tries to control the shaking in his hands, looks to Elaine.

ELAINE
Little trick I learned from Percy Wetmore.

PAUL
Is your grandson really Speaker of the House?

ELAINE
He is.

Paul bends down, picks Mr. Jingles up.

PAUL
You gonna thank the lady? She just saved your old mousie hide.

The mouse stretches his neck forward, nose twitching, smelling Paul's breath. Paul looks to Elaine. Softly:

PAUL
I think Mr. Jingles happened by accident. I think when we electrocuted Del, and it all went so badly...well, John could feel it, you know...and I think a tiny part of whatever was inside of him just leapt out...
(beat)
Me, I was no accident. John had to give me a little part of himself... a gift, like...so I could see for myself what Wild Bill had done. When John did that, a part of whatever power worked through him spilled into me.

ELAINE
He...what? Infected you with life?

Paul looks at the mouse, strokes him gently between the ears.

PAUL
That's as good a word as any. He infected us both, didn't he, Mr. Jingles? With life.
(beat)
I'm a hundred and five years old, Elaine. I was forty the year John Coffey walked the Green Mile.

ELAINE
...oh my God...

CAMERA PUSHES SLOWLY IN on Paul as:

PAUL
I haven't even had a cold since 1935. I've had to watch my friends and loved ones die off through the years...Hal and Melinda...Brutus Howell...my wife...my son...
(beat)
...and you, Elaine. You'll die, too, and my curse is knowing I'll be there to see it...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Paul, dressed in a dark suit, comes up the aisle. ANGLE SHIFTS to reveal Elaine Connelly lying in the open casket.

PAUL (V.O.)
...that's my punishment, you see? My punishment for letting John Coffey ride the lightning...for killing a miracle of God...

Paul lays a rose atop the casket.

PAUL (V.O.)
...you'll be gone, like all the others, and I'll have to stay...

EXT - CEMETERY - DAY

Paul stands at the graveside as the casket is lowered.

PAUL (V.O.)
I'll die eventually, I imagine. I have no illusions of immortality. But I will have wished for death long before death finds me.

He turns and walks away.

PAUL (V.O.)
In truth, I wish for it already.

INT - E BLOCK - NIGHT (1935)

Empty and silent. Young Paul walks the Mile alone, listening to the quiet. He pauses, seeing something. A whisper:

PAUL
Mr. Jingles?

It is Mr. Jingles. The little mouse is peering from under the restraint room door. He's come home, looking bedraggled. Paul bends down, gently picks him up.

PAUL
Where you been, boy? I've been worried about you. You hungry?

Paul turns and heads back up the Green Mile, carrying the mouse cupped in his hands as we

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

INT - NURSING HOME - DAY

Young Paul transforms into Old Paul in the dissolve, the corridor of the Green Mile becoming the corridor of the nursing home. He's walking along, holding the little mouse the same way he did over sixty years ago.

PAUL (V.O.)
I lie in bed most nights, thinking about it. And I wait...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT - PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul lies awake, staring at the moon outside his window.

PAUL (V.O.)
I think about all the people I've loved, now long gone. I think about my beautiful Jan, and how I lost her so many years ago. I think about all of us walking our own Green Mile, each in our own time. But one thought, more than any other, keeps me awake most nights...
(beat)
...if he could make a mouse live so long, how much longer do I have?

He looks over at the nightstand...

PAUL (V.O.)
We each owe a death, there are no exceptions, but sometimes, oh God, the Green Mile is so long...

...and WE PAN to reveal Mr. Jingles sleeping fitfully in his cigar box, chasing that spool in his dreams as we

FADE OUT

THE END